

EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.



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S E R M O N

ON THE

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS

of

COMMEMORATION

IN THE

CHURCH of ENGLAND.

BY THE REVEREND

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

AS, in the Church of England, and in some other churches, the subjects of the discourses contained in this volume, are subjects of annual commemoration, perhaps it may not be amiss, to examine into the authority upon which such a custom is grounded. To a christian the bible, and especially the new testament, is the supreme law respecting christian worship, and the grand charter of christian liberty. From this fountain all legal authority in religious matters must flow. By this standard all religious observances must be tried.

THE doctrine of christian liberty does not empower any man to set up his own will as the rule of government in the church of God; nor does it give us any warrant, rashly to follow the whim of the moment in things which relate to religious worship. If it gave such licences as these, it would defeat it's own end. It requires prudence and thoughtfulness in the whole of our conduct. It is beautifully illustrated in the fourteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. A proper attention to that chapter will go a great way towards our forming of proper ideas upon the subject.

FROM the passage which I have now mentioned, it appears, that some religious ceremonies and customs are not essential to our salvation, nor to the constitution of a christian church. They are allowed by apostolical authority; but not expressly commanded, nor forbidden. If
any

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any person abstain from things, which are positively commanded, or adopt customs, which are expressly forbidden, he may as well renounce all pretensions to christianity. But in things of smaller moment, much is left to the discretion of churches, and of individuals. Thus, even in St. Paul's time, it was said, *One believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* These, and all other customs of a similar degree of importance, I call indifferent. The observance and the non-observance of them are objects of mutual toleration.

Now the good or evil of such customs does not arise immediately from themselves; but from a variety of collateral circumstances, such as the motives upon which we conform to, or refrain from them,

and the influence which our conduct may have upon our fellow christians. If we consider these customs abstractedly from such circumstances, we may apply to them what the apostle saith of meats offered to idols. *Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* But viewed in their connection with those circumstances, they become subjects of serious consideration. The morality or immorality of many actions springs directly from the intention of him who performs them. This is the case in the observance of commemoration days. *If he who regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord,* that is, if he does it from a sincere desire to honour and serve the Lord thereby, however his conduct may be censured by men, yet it is truly acceptable to God. So, *if he who regardeth not the day,* doth so out of reverence to his Redeemer,

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Redeemer, his abstaining from such a custom is equally acceptable. Indeed, a good intention can never sanctify a bad action; but it may and does sanctify those actions, which are in themselves indifferent. But supposing that we are connected with individuals, or families, or churches, whose views in such things do not entirely accord with ours, we ought to forego our own inclinations, rather than by our example influence them to do that which they think unlawful, or to refrain from that, which they judge requisite and proper. *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself. Let no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.*

It appears further, that our obedience to some general commands of scripture relative to christian worship may be properly expressed, even in different ways. Let us select one instance only. St. Paul saith,

Let all things be done decently, and in order. One christian church will apply this to those parts of worship or discipline, on which we have no particular commands; and will frame a system orderly and good. Another will frame a system equally good, though somewhat different. The one will perhaps include in it's system the keeping of certain days of commemoration; the other will exclude them: yet both may be equally worthy of imitation, and equally conformable to the apostolical precept.

THUS have I pointed out the ground, on which stands the keeping of such days in our national church. With us, they are in themselves things confessedly indifferent. They are judged at present, conducive to real piety; but declared to be alterable from time to time, as circumstances may require. Should any one object to this statement, by saying, that the days spoken of in the chapter here referred
to

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to were jewish festivals, the objection has no weight : for if jewish festivals were objects of toleration, certainly those which are professedly christian have as good a claim. But it may be said, that St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, condemns the keeping of such days. To this I answer, that the apostle would never blame in one place, what he freely allows in another, provided that it be attended with the same circumstances. He condemns not the mere keeping of a day, but the placing of our dependance upon such a custom as if it could justify a sinner before God. Christians have a right to observe such days, or not, as they may judge expedient : but they have no right to condemn each other on any such account. *Let not him who observeth them, despise him who observeth them not : and let not him who observeth them not, despise him who doth : for God hath received him.*

WHATEVER

WHATEVER may be our ideas of such customs, it must be acknowledged, that the subjects of the following discourses are subjects of importance. As to the manner in which the author has acquitted himself, he is silent. He is not however without an humble hope, that the Father of mercies will water the seed here sown, and cause it to spring up, and bring forth fruit unto everlasting life.

T H E

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

On the NATIVITY of CHRIST.

(Christmas Day)

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On the ESTABLISHMENT of the CHRIS- TIAN MINISTRY.

(Whit-Sunday.)

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S E R M O N I.

On the NATIVITY of CHRIST.

(Christmas Day.)

LUKE ii. 7.

*And she brought forth her first born son,
and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,
and laid him in a manger, because there
was no room for them in the inn.*

THE event which, under the di- S E R M.
vine providence, we are this day I.
called upon to celebrate, has
nothing in it to gratify the taste of a sen-
sual worldly man. Insensible of his need
of salvation, he has no relish for that spi-
ritual harmony, which is occasioned and
excited by the great Redeemer's birth.

B

He

S E R M. I. He may indeed attend the exterior services
 of the church ; but in his heart he virtually says of Christ, that *he hath no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire him.* But the good man, taught to judge of things according to their real worth more than by their outward appearance, turns his inquisitive eye towards the land of Judea, observes the Saviour's entrance into human life, and perceives in that event the utmost importance, and grandeur, and glory. Let our thoughts range a little in this pleasing field of meditation.

AUGUSTUS CESAR the roman emperor, being desirous of knowing the state of his extensive dominions, both with regard to the number of his subjects, and with respect to the property which they possessed, made a decree that all the world, that is, all the roman empire should be taxed. This decree required not only that a certain tribute should be paid, but also that the names of the inhabitants of the various countries, which were subject to Cesar's authority, together with their family connections,

On the Nativity of Christ.

1

lections, and probably their possessions, should be noted down in the public records. For these purposes every man went to his own native place. Among those who were lineally descended from David the king of Israel, there was a poor man, whose name was Joseph, and whose occupation was that of a carpenter. This man, in order to be taxed, went up from the city of Nazareth, in the province of Galilee, where he then resided, into Judea, to the city of David, or, as it was commonly called, Bethlehem. Mary his espoused wife, who was then in a state of pregnancy, accompanied him in this journey. And it so happened, *that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.* This son of Mary, though born in humiliating circumstances, is the Saviour of the world. This is he whose

S E R M. nativity now animates the devotions of
 I. the christian church.

WITH a little attention we may perceive, that in the birth of Christ, there was a perfect conformity to the general conduct of God in carrying on the glorious work of redemption. In what way soever the God of wisdom chuses to accomplish his purposes of mercy, there is always something in their fulfilment evidently supernatural. It was promised to Abraham, that in him all the families of the earth should be *blest. By this promise the Divine Being meant that the Redeemer of the world should be numbered amongst Abraham's posterity. But Isaac, from whom also Christ was to descend, was not born till both Abraham and Sarah were so far advanced in years, that, according to the course of nature, it was impossible for them to have children. Isaac *might* have been born long before. But God had determined to display the efficacy of his own power: and therefore he deferred

* Gen. xii. 3.

this event, till Abraham was about an S E R M.
hundred years old, and till it ceased to be I.
with Sarah after the manner of women.

Thus also God chose that the deliverance of his people Israel from their egyptian bondage should appear to be, what it really was, the work of an almighty hand. When the dreadful plagues were poured out upon Egypt, the magicians soon found their enchantments fail, and were constrained to say, *This is the finger of *God.* The march of the Jews through the wilderness likewise, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, were almost one continued manifestation of supernatural power and goodness. At the Red Sea they were saved, and their enemies destroyed. In the wilderness, manna descended from heaven to feed them, and water flowed from the rock to give them drink. Their feet did not swell during a journey of forty years; neither did their clothes wax old upon them. And they were enabled to drive out nations greater and mightier

* Ex. viii. 19.

S. E. R. M.

I.



than themselves, and to possess a land flowing with milk and honey. In all these things the Deity appears. And long after these times, his power was equally evident, in the introduction of the gospel into the world. As the author of christianity aimed at nothing short of overturning the general maxims and customs of mankind, and of rooting out the strongest prejudices of the human heart, one would naturally expect to find, that he had chosen for his apostles men of eminence and authority. Whereas he selected the greater part of them from among the meanest orders of men, and pitched upon such as, in the eye of human reason, were the most unlikely to accomplish his intentions. The gospel, that invaluable treasure, was deposited *in earthen vessels*, that as St. Paul saith, *the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of *man*. Even to this day, the gospel is the *power of God*, unto salvation. It frequently triumphs over the prejudices of men; engages them


* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

to renounce their most prevailing sins; SERM.
lays them prostrate at the Redeemer's feet; I.
and begets in them such a vigorous tendency to holiness, as will maintain its ground, at the hazard, or even at the certain expence of every earthly enjoyment which is valuable and dear. These are not the productions of mere human literature, or abilities, or eloquence. It has sometimes been seen that the most immoral and profligate characters have been brought to the knowledge of the truth, while others, who appeared to be *not far from the kingdom of God*, have continued under an awful veil of blindness. God hath determined that in the whole work of human redemption his own power shall appear. Therefore, that the birth of Jesus Christ might be conformable to the general plan of the divine proceedings, it seems to have been highly expedient that there should be something in it supernatural. Indeed, that a woman should bring forth a child, has nothing in it remarkable; but, that a *virgin* should conceive,

SERM.
I. and bear a son, is contrary to the established course of nature; and proves to us that the blessed infant was formed in the womb, by the power of the Almighty. This uncommon and supernatural event is both worthy of God, and perfectly conformable to the whole system of the gospel.

It is not unworthy of recollection, that in the Saviour's nativity there was also a suitableness to the peculiar design of his coming into the world, inasmuch as he was the *first born* son. In the patriarchal ages of the world, the condition of the first born was superior to that of his brethren. He was generally the priest of the family, and was heir to his father's dignity and authority, and to a double portion of his property. In the early part of the jewish government, the first child which every woman brought forth, if it proved a male, was, at the command of God, solemnly devoted to him. Afterwards, the tribe of Levi was consecrated to God, instead of the first born sons of the

the

the whole race of Israel. It is written, SERM.
I.
The Levites are wholly given unto me from 
amongst the children of Israel, instead of
such as open every womb, even instead of
the first born of all the children of Israel,
have I taken them unto me. For all the
first born of the children of Israel are mine,
both man and beast : in the day that I smote
every first born in the land of Egypt, I sanc-
tified them for myself. And I have taken
the Levites for all the first born of the chil-
*dren of *Israel.* Thus the Levites were
appointed to be the representatives of the
elder sons of all the twelve tribes. Jesus
Christ therefore, being the first born son of
Mary, was virtually, in the estimation of
the jewish law, a person peculiarly devoted
to God. And in this circumstance there
was a kind of suitability to the great end
for which he became incarnate.

THE Redeemer did not come into the
world to engage in the government of em-
pires, nor to intermeddle in the policy of

* Num. viii. 16, 17, 18.

SERM.

I.



nations. At his coming, he found civil government existing under different forms; and when he quitted the world, he left those different forms of government as he found them. He taught his disciples conscientiously to obey their civil rulers; and he furnished the world with a system of doctrine, which might infuse a purer morality into the various modes of legislation: but, to be a minister of worldly policy, was beneath the dignity, and beneath the notice of the Saviour of mankind. He was indeed a king; but *his kingdom was not of this world*.—Neither did he enter upon the stage of life, with any intention to act in the busy scenes of trade. Industry and commerce he did not despise: but greater and more important objects engrossed his attention.—Much less did he make his appearance on the earth as the slave of sensual pleasure and dissipation. These he discountenanced by his own exemplary conduct: and he hath shown in his gospel, how unsuitable they are to the christian character. He came into the world

world that he might devote his whole life to the service of God, and the salvation of his people. It is written of him, *When he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will* *O God. From his most early infancy his thoughts and affections were fixed on the things which are above. In due time he assumed the office of a public teacher of religion. This office he executed with wisdom, and fidelity, and zeal. He re-
 proved the sins of the people; he healed their diseases; he tore off the mask of the hypocrite, he removed the fears of the penitent; and laid a sure foundation for human hope. He took upon him the priesthood, not that he might offer in sacrifice bulls, or sheep, or goats; for it is impossible that the blood of such creatures

SERM.
I.

* Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.

SERM.

I.

should take away sin : but that he might offer up *himself* as a victim to the righteous vengeance of God, for the sins of the world. Agreeably to this remark, it is said, *Now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of *himself.*—And by becoming man, he qualified himself also for the supreme government of the christian church. We are informed by the sacred writ[†] that, *God hath appointed his Son heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high : being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* In our nature he now sits on the throne of his glory ; and exercises such a government over the consciences of his disciples as it is their

* Heb. ix. 26.

† Heb. i. 2, 3, 4.

happiness

happinefs to obey. The very circum-
stance of his being the first born son, seems
to be emblematical of his being the teacher,
and the priest, and the governor of his
people.

S E R M.

I.

I REMARK further, that the manner and circumstances of the birth of Christ were contrary to all human expectation. The preparations which were made by divine providence for the advent of the Lord Messiah were great and solemn. The promises of his coming had for four thousand years sustained the faith, and animated the hopes of good men. For many ages, when the jewish nation had fallen into any deep calamity, their sinking spirits could not be more speedily nor more effectually roused, than by renewing the promise of his advent and kingdom. The prophets clothed their predictions concerning the Redeemer of Israel in all the pomp of language. The subject on which they treated infused the utmost grandeur and sublimity into their thoughts and expressions. They describe his character

SERM. I. **R**after as the MIGHTY GOD, the EVER-
 LASTING FATHER, the PRINCE OF
 PEACE. They teach us that *Of the in-
 crease of his government and peace there
 shall be no *end. Yea, all kings shall fall
 down before him ; all nations shall serve
 him. His name shall endure for ever ; his
 name shall be continued as long as the sun,
 and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations
 shall call him †blessed.* When the time of
 the Redeemer's birth drew near, devout
 men were anxiously waiting for the Conso-
 lation of Israel. At length a star appears
 in the east to inform the wise men that
 God was become incarnate. An angel
 communicates the joyful tidings to the
 shepherds. The hosts of heaven unite in
 proclaiming the honours of the Prince of
 Peace. Herod trembles on his throne ;
 and all Jerusalem is troubled. Such splen-
 did and solemn tokens of the Messiah's ap-
 pearance raise our expectations high. With
 eagerness we enquire, *Who? Where is he*

* Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

† Ps. lxxii. 11, 17.

that is born king of the Jews? What SERM.
I. magnificent palace contains the Lord of glory? Where stands his throne?—Christians; look into yonder stable. That is the palace of your God. The manger is his throne; swaddling clothes are his robes of state; and poverty and meanness are his attendants. Well might the apostle say, *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* Yes, he hath. He has absorbed and confounded our ideas in the mysterious depths of his own conduct. The incarnate Saviour possesses real glory: but it is not of that kind which fascinates and charms the sensual eye: it is a glory, *not of this world.*

BUT this is not the only instance in which the expectations of men are disappointed. The Redeemer of sinners still loves to dwell, where human vanity disdains to make its appearance. The profession of christianity is become general in all the nations of Europe, so that almost every body now calls himself a christian. And those who have not accustomed them-

S E R M.
I.

— selves to look further than the surface of things, readily conclude that all such as profess to have received the gospel of Christ, are undoubtedly in the way which leads to eternal life. But if we expect to find the spiritual presence of Christ amongst the *many*, we are sadly deceived. *Not every one who saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Hence in the gospel he says, *Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find *it.* True godliness hath her friends: but they are a select company, *whose hearts God hath touched*, and who are generally disregarded by the world, and often treated with contempt.

To be more particular on this head: it is by no means unfrequently supposed that men of wisdom, of good natural abilities,

* Matt. vii. 13, 14.

and of education, are likely to be the best S E R M.
I.
 christians in this world, and to enjoy the }
 largest share of glory in the next. The
 accomplishments of the mind ought not
 indeed to be despised. If they be culti-
 vated with a view to the glory of God,
 they are truly valuable. But men of great
 abilities are not always the most eminent
 for piety. In fact, till they receive such
 instruction as the world cannot give, they,
 as well as others, are, in all spiritual
 things, totally ignorant and blind. The
 Divine Being is often honoured by chris-
 tians of a rough unpolished cast, more than
 by the sons of the prophets, or the disci-
 ples of the wise. Sometimes the unlet-
 tered man hath been enabled to understand
 the bible, while the votaries of human sci-
 ence have continued in midnight darkness.
 Jesus Christ saith, *I thank thee, O Father,*
Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast
hidden these things from the wise and pru-
*dent, and hast revealed them unto *babes.*

* Matt. xi. 25.

S E R M.
 I.
 — In things which relate to our eternal happiness, God usually conducts himself in a manner that is contrary to the expectations of worldly wisdom. So different was the appearance of Christ from what the Jews expected it to be, that when he appeared, they treated him with contempt. *He came unto his own; and his own received him *not.*—My christian brèthren, let us be humble. Let us remember that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men.*

IN fine, it is observable that the Son of God preferred a life of poverty to a state of affluence and ease. He was born in a stable, and nursed in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. If his parents had been persons of fortune and rank, suitable accommodations, no doubt, would have been found for them in preference to many others. But poverty and inconvenience go hand in hand. Joseph and Mary were poor, and consequently were obliged to submit

* John i. 11.

to the inconveniences attendant on their condition in life. But why this distress? S E R M.
I.
Could the whole world not provide a palace for their King and God? Could they furnish no guards to attend his person, nor heralds to proclaim his glory? Alas! the highest honours of this world were inadequate to his true dignity, and utterly unworthy of his notice. The world and all its treasures belonged to him as the Lord of universal nature: but he voluntarily embraced a state of poverty, in preference to all those honourable distinctions, to which he had the strongest claim.

IN this, as also in other parts of his conduct, he hath clearly shown that, in his estimation, worldly honours, and fortune, and rank, are things of small value. The evidences of this truth are plain and irresistible. Some of the richest and most fruitful parts of the earth are given to those tribes of men which rebel against the Supreme Majesty of heaven, and worship idols of their own workmanship and invention. Mahometans and Moors are re-
C 2 velling

SERM.

I.

velling in all the profusions and luxuries of nature; while some nations who serve the living God, are obliged to earn their temporal enjoyments by incessant labour and fatigue. These however, can boast of diviner treasures, and of more durable felicity. The compassionate Saviour, in granting to them his gospel, hath opened for them a fountain of happiness which can never be dried up.—And if we look into those countries where christianity is commonly professed, we may, without much difficulty, perceive that genuine piety is mostly found amongst the middling and lower classes of men. When we enter the mansions of the great, we sometimes see politeness, and wit, and taste, and genius, in their most cultivated state: but if we expect to find there much of the true spirit and power of religion, we grossly mistake. St. Paul saith, *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are *called.* It is true, some of the

* 1 Cor. i. 26.

rich and honourable ones of the earth are made to know and feel the happy influence of the gospel. But usually if we wish to trace the footsteps of the Redeemer, we must search for them in the humbler walks of human life. The apostle James says, *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them who love him?* The Saviour might have been born in circumstances of ease and splendor, and might have adorned both himself and his people with all the glittering ornaments of wealth : but both for himself and for them he chose a state, which, having less power to attach them to this world, might be more conducive to their preparation for the world to come.

LET us, my brethren, descend to day from the towering pinnacles of pride. Let us enter into the stable, and fix our eyes upon the manger which contains the young Redeemer. True faith will penetrate thro'


* James ii. 5.

S E R M.
 I.
 the veil of his poverty, and discover in him
 real dignity and glory. Though poor, he
 is possessor of all the stores of nature. Tho'
 a helpless infant, he is the everliving God.
 If you would share in his salvation, you
 must become like him. You have heard
 that he made his appearance in the world,
 in a manner which confounded the wis-
 dom and the expectations of mankind:
 And you, if you would be the children of
 God, must renounce the general maxims
 of the world; you must meet with firm-
 ness it's ridicule and contempt; and must
 *go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bear-
 ing his *reproach.* You must become
 poor in spirit. You must be made willing
 to sacrifice your ambition, and pleasure,
 and ease, and reputation, and even to be-
 come, in the opinion of the world, fools
 for his sake. However plain and poor
 his church may be, it is your glory to
 enter into it. and however his gospel may
 be despised, it is your happiness to em-
 brace it. O then, renounce all depend-

* Heb. xiii. 13.

ance on your merits and your duties. Sa- SERM.
I.
crifice your sins. Give up every thing {
which would prevent your salvation. Prostrate yourselves in the dust before the Son of Mary, and, like the apostle, *count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.*

REMEMBER, I beseech you, the grand intention of the Lord Jesus in taking upon him our nature. He stooped thus low, that he might raise us to the possession of life, and immortality, and glory. *He was made of a woman made under the law*, that he might become obedient, even unto death, for our redemption. Take then the encouragement which his condescending love affords. Though you see yourselves to be vile, and guilty, and unworthy of even the smallest notice, yet be not too much cast down. He will not reject your petitions for mercy ; for he waits to be gracious. Ye who are sensible that you are in yourselves spiritually poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked,

SERM.
I.  naked, *behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.* See his table covered with the emblems and pledges of salvation. He invites, he bids you come. Approach then, ye welcome guests, commemorate his redeeming love, receive the blessings which his bounty hath prepared, wipe away your tears, and rejoice in him for ever.

S E R M O N II.

On the DESIGN of the SAVIOUR'S INCARNATION.

(Christmas Day.)

2 CORINTHIANS viii. 9.

*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though he was rich, yet for your
sakes he became poor, that ye through
his poverty might be rich.*

ONE of the leading features of the SERM.
gospel is mercy. And by this it is II.
remarkably distinguished from the cove-
nant of works which God originally made
with man. The law promises life to none
but the perfectly good and righteous. It
admits of no defective obedience, however
sincere.

S E R M.
II.

fincere. It makes no provision for the restoration of sinners to forfeited happiness. It dooms every transgressor to endless ruin. But the gospel thunders out it's anathemas against none but the man who stubbornly rejects the only Saviour. It is addressed to mankind in the express character of sinners: and it discovers to them an unbounded treasure of mercy. It proclaims a free pardon to the guilty of every description, who are willing to be saved. It administers consolation to the wretched, pours the healing balm of a Saviour's blood into the wounded conscience, and leads the repenting sinner to the full possession of eternal life.

THIS subject, it is true, is only an incidental one in the chapter before us. The object which St. Paul had more immediately in view was, to excite in the corinthian church a generous zeal in administering relief to the poor saints at Jerusalem. He wished them to abound in liberality, because it is one of the noblest ornaments of the christian profession. But, while

while dwelling on this topic, he could not SERM.
II.
~~help~~ introducing that which was his most
 constant and most delightful theme, the
 compassion and grace of the Redeemer.
 Indeed it was very natural and proper for
 him so to do. Nothing can more effect-
 ually rouse good men to generous action
 than setting before them the glorious ex-
 ample of the Son of God. *Ye know, saith*
the apostle ; the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, that though he was rich, yet for
your sakes he become poor, that ye through
his poverty might be rich. God grant that
 while we now contemplate this wonderful
 display of grace, we may truly feel it's
 blessed influence !

THE sacred writer affirms that our Lord
 Jesus Christ was rich. He speaks in what
 grammarians call the past tense, not to fill
 our minds with a supposition that Christ,
 after his incarnation, possessed no real
 dignity, but merely to comply with the
 customary rules of language. The Saviour
 is rich. Fields and meadows with their
 various productions, *every beast of the*
forest,

S E R M.
II.

forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field, are his. The splendid mansions of the earth are parts of his inheritance. The lordly possessors of them are only tenants at will. Their houses, and lands, and wealth, and pleasures, and honours, must all be surrendered up at his command, "The gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself, yea, all which it inherit" belong to him. But why do I speak of this globe? At his command suns blaze, and thousands of planets move in their appointed courses. And yet even this is but a small thing in his account. He need only speak the word, and numberless myriads of worlds shall leap into existence in the twinkling of an eye, and do homage to him as their rightful Lord.

ALL the treasures of the *rational* creation are his. The minds, the wills, the affections, and the services, of angels and of men innumerable are in the long catalogue of his possessions, and are devoted to
his

pleasure. In heaven, both human and angelic beings tune their melodious harps to his praise. And his service and his approbation constitute their sole felicity. Upon earth, there cannot be found a real christian, who would willingly and deliberately cherish an unhallowed propensity in his bosom, or harbour even one thought that is displeasing to the Son of God. His servants, notwithstanding their manifold infirmities, would cheerfully sacrifice for his sake their greatest and best, yea, *all* their temporal enjoyments. Even the bad passions of men and devils are subject to his awful controul. He can say to them, *Hitherto shall ye come, but no farther.* He can defeat their counsels, render their rage against himself and his people ineffectual, and overrule their wickedness so as to make it subservient to the accomplishment of his own intentions.

BUT he rises still higher in dignity. He possesses that, to which all that I have mentioned are but the natural appendages. *In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.*

Power

S E R M.
II.

SERM. II. Power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, infinity, eternity, and all other perfections of Supreme Deity, are essential to his very existence.—But in contemplations of this sort, the human mind feels forcibly it's own insignificance. The riches and magnificence of Christ are such as beggar description, and put all finite comprehension to a stand.

YET the glorious Jesus, so abundant in riches, became poor. He laid aside the honours which were his due, and came down from the abodes of blessedness, to take upon him our nature. Though, *being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of *men.* It would have been an act of great humiliation in him to assume the *angelic* nature. But he stooped yet lower. *He took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of*

* Phillip. ii. 6, 7.

**Abraham.* And even the human nature SERM.
II. he did not assume, in what the world would call its most delightful form : he took it in it's most abject state. Born of poor parents, he could boast of none of the advantages which belong to the superior stations of life. He apparently spent his childhood and youth in dull obscurity. When arrived at manhood, he not only was a stranger to luxurious elegance and ease ; but actually *possessed months of vanity ; and wearisome nights were appointed to him.* Toil, and fatigue, and want, were his constant companions. His state of life, in respect to accommodation, was inferior to that of the fowls which fly in the air, or to that of the beasts which perish. *The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests ; but the Son of man had not where to lay his †head.* When called upon to pay tribute, he could not raise the necessary sum, but at the expence of a miracle. And indeed, he was generally sup-

• Heb. ii. 16. † Luke ix. 58.

S E R M.
II.

ported by the charitable contributions of some of his followers. In the world at large he found no sympathy. The feelings of a person struggling with poverty and hardship are relieved, when his circumstances excite the compassion, and his conduct conciliates the good will of others. But to this relief the Son of God was, for the most part, a stranger. He possessed very little of the esteem, or even the pity of mankind. His unspeakable excellencies they beheld, and wondered at, and despised. By the greater part of them he was treated with illiberal scorn, and pointed indignation. The invenomed shafts of malice were levelled at him, almost wherever he went. His unaffected piety and all the other shining graces of his character could not screen him. On the contrary, they were even the means of hurrying him to a cruel and ignominious end. *He was numbered with *transgressors*, and condemned, and executed, as a wretch

* Isaiah liii, 12.

too vile to be endured. And in his last S E R M.
II.
 dreadful conflict, while sinners mocked
 his thirst, the cup of divine consolation
 was witholden. Heaven afforded not one
 smile to soothe his bleeding anguish. He
 was poor indeed !

BUT what could plunge the God of nature into such depths of humiliation? Could unforeseen or inevitable misfortune deprive him of his possessions and honours? No. He is not subject to misfortune or disappointment. It was his own voluntary act. It was an act of grace. The apostle saith, *Ye know the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ.* He was under no natural obligation to stoop so low, or to do any thing at all, for the redemption of his guilty creatures. He left offending angels without the most distant prospect of happiness or pardon : and he might have justly left the whole human race to reap eternally the bitter fruits of guilt. There is nothing whatever in the principles, dispositions, or conduct of men, which can possibly deserve the notice of God, much

SERM.
II.

less deserve so great a mercy as that Christ should become a poor outcast for their sakes. The Saviour's humiliation flows from a fountain of pure grace: it is an effusion of unmerited favour. The design of Christ in it was truly benevolent. *He became poor, that ye, my christian brethren, through his poverty might be rich.*

I CANNOT help observing here, by the way, what a goodly prospect this subject opens to them who are poor and low in the world. Necessitated to labour hard, in order to obtain their scanty pittance, perhaps they labour too under the apprehension that the exalted blessings of religion are beyond their reach. But they need not imagine that their poverty excludes them from the Redeemer's notice. They are placed in low situations; but Jesus Christ hath stooped quite as low. He became a poor man, and experienced all their miseries and wants, on purpose that such of them as truly seek his blessing might have hope, on purpose that they might possess everlasting treasures.

BUT

BUT whatever distinction of outward SERM.
II.
 circumstances may have obtained amongst }
 men, yet, in a spiritual view, we are all
 by nature *wretched, and miserable, and*
poor, and blind, and naked. We may
 possess what is called moral virtue, we may
 enjoy health, friendship, learning, respect,
 and a variety of things beside; yet, in the
 midst of all our possessions, we are, in the
 eye of God, poor miserable creatures.
 We are destitute of real religion, and of
 all it's happy fruits and consequences. We
 possess no righteousness that can give us a
 clear title to felicity. *Shapen in iniquity*
and conceived in sin, we naturally have no
 love to God, no confidence in his word,
 nor conformity to his will. In fact, we
 are, from the first moment of our exist-
 ence, prone to transgression. And our
 best duties, however well performed, can-
 not by any means atone for our past cri-
 minality. But, our best duties, what are
 they? The prophet saith, *All our righte-*
*ousnesses are as filthy *rags.* We have need

* Isaiah lxiv. 6.

SERM.
II.

to mourn over the imperfections of our repentance itself, and to pray that our tears may be cleansed from impurity in the blood of Jesus. Now as sinners, we have no true peace, either with God, or in our own souls. We cannot enjoy communion with him ; nor feel the pleasures which arise from evidence of an interest in his favour. We have no claim to the peculiar care of divine providence here, nor well grounded expectations of blessedness hereafter. To sum up the whole of our spiritual poverty in a word, we are naturally *without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the *world.*

FROM such an abject state however, Jesus Christ came down from heaven to deliver us. He placed himself in circumstances of poverty and misery, that, by bringing us to the knowledge of God, he might make us possessors of every privi-

lege and blessing which is calculated to render us perfectly happy. The disciples of Christ may appear to the world *as having nothing, and yet they possess all things.* For it is said to them in the scripture, *All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is *God's.* S E R M.
II.

JESUS CHRIST, by his humiliation, hath obtained for his people the absolute grant of a full and gracious remission of all their guilt. As by nature they are sinners, the righteous law of God hath pronounced them guilty, and passed upon them the sentence of eternal death. And their own consciences bear testimony to the justness of their doom. But as Christ became their surety, and paid their debt, God hath given them a full discharge. The law does not condemn them now; nor does justice require their punishment. Satan may accuse them, and the world may reproach them with their past sins, and their present infirmities: but, in answer to such

* 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

S E R M.
II.

accusations and reproaches, they can plead, not their innocence, but a free pardon through the blood of Jesus. And when at any time they are overtaken in a fault, (*for there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not,*) they may again have free access to the mercy seat. I speak this, not as a licence to commit *sin* that grace may abound, but rather as an encouragement to those, who, having fallen into temptation, are bowed down under a renewed sense of guilt. The true christian abhors iniquity, and, if he have backslidden from God, he knows how much it has cost him to regain his former peace. But Christ humbled himself even to death, that backsliders who are seeking for mercy, may find it. *His blood cleanseth from all *sin.*

THE humiliation of Christ is productive, not only of an exemption from the penalties of the covenant of works, but also of a complete title to eternal felicity.


* 1 John i. 7.

The law of God can admit no claim to it's rewards, but what is founded on perfect obedience to it's precepts. Consequently, *as we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God,* we can advance no legal claim whatever. But Christ our Supreme Lord and Lawgiver became subject to the law, that in our nature. and in our behalf, he might yield the most perfect obedience to all it's demands. He hath wrought out for us a complete righteousness. And, as our guilt was imputed to him, so his righteousness is placed to the account of every sincere believer. Hence St. Paul saith, *By the obedience of one shall many be made *righteous;* and in another place, *God hath made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in †him.* It is on account of this righteousness, and this alone, that sinners now find acceptance with God. And the hope which is built on this foundation stands firm, and can never be overthrown.

SERM.
II.

* Romans v 19. † 2 Cor. iii. 14.

S E R M.
II.


 CLOSBLY connected with remission and justification is communion with God. While man continued in innocence, he enjoyed the most delightful intercourse with his Maker. When he sinned, he was driven out from Paradise, that he might know that God is *of purer eyes* than to tolerate iniquity in his presence. And though, after man's fall, it pleased God to give the promise of a Redeemer, yet, except to a few whose faith was more than commonly penetrating, the manifestations of grace were, for many ages, far from being clear. Under the mosaical œconomy, in which the plan of redemption was marked out in typical ordinances, a veil hid the mercy seat from the eyes of the people. But that veil is rent: *it is done away in Christ*. We may now enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through his veil, that is to say his **flesh*. He hath by his humiliation, pro-

* Heb. x. 19, 20

cured for his people free access to the S E R M.
II. throne of mercy. So that we may now, without restraint, and without fear, enter into the immediate presence of God. Hence, to the real christian, the various ordinances of religious worship are not mere ceremonious forms: they are services which penetrate his inmost soul, and unite him more closely to his heavenly Father. Does he feel his utter insufficiency to do any good thing? Does he conflict with powerful enemies? Or does he groan under an accumulated weight of affliction? He is enabled to pour out his complaints before the mercy seat, and to repose himself in the bosom of his God. Does he labour under emotions of admiration and gratitude? He gives vent to his feelings, in expressions of humble praise. When he bows before God, though he speak in broken accents, he speaks the language of the heart: and often receives such intimations of the divine favour, as fill him with a pleasure which is truly sublime. Sometimes his petitions to God are
favoured

S E R M.
II.

favoured with distinguished returns of mercy : at one season, he obtains clearer discoveries of the glory of Christ in the work of redemption : at another, he tastes more largely the sweetness of the divine promises : and in some happy moments of his life he is permitted, as from the top of some lofty mountain, to take a view of the goodly land of promise. These are not the visionary dreams of an enthusiast : they are the real enjoyments of the disciples and friends of Christ.

HAVING just mentioned the divine promises, I am led further to observe that Jesus Christ, by taking upon him our nature, hath procured for us a special interest in all the gracious promises of God. True godliness *hath the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.* But it is in Christ that the promises are made and confirmed : for we cannot possess a principle of godliness till it is imparted to us by his Holy Spirit. Accordingly, it is said by the apostle, *All the promises*

nises of God in him are yea, and in him S E R M.
*amen, unto the glory of God by *us.* II. The
 Divine Being hath, in the bible, merci-
 fully promised to his people every thing
 which a good man can wish to enjoy. He
 hath promised pardon to the guilty, instruc-
 tion to the ignorant, and strength to the
 weak. He hath given to his servants as-
 surance of a sufficiency of the good
 things of this life. He hath promised
 to guide their feet in the way of peace.
 He hath engaged to support them un-
 der their troubles, and to defend them
 against all their spiritual enemies. He
 hath declared that he will convert all the
 evils of life into real blessings. He hath
 pledged himself to carry them in safety
 through the pilgrimage of life ; and to re-
 ceive them at last to himself. These pro-
 mises, like precious pearls, adorn almost
 every page of the sacred writings. Like
 ripe fruit of the finest flavour, they invite
 all to taste their sweetness. They are

* 2 Cor. i. 20.

SERM.
II.

given to the whole church of God; so that even the poorest and meanest of the followers of Christ may claim them as his own. And they are not words without a meaning: for whatever God hath promised, he hath ability, and willingness, and faithfulness also to perform.

FRIENDSHIP with God, and a peculiar interest in his promises and proclamations of mercy, are privileges which necessarily imply the possession of a godlike temper in him who enjoys them. *How can two walk together, except they be agreed?* No two persons upon earth, one of whom generally approves what the other condemns, and relishes what in the other excites disgust, can live in the habit of mutual friendship. Neither can there be any actual friendship between God and man, unless their ruling tempers and aims be alike. The disposition and the character of God are clearly described in his word. But they are widely different from what we naturally find in man. This dissimilarity makes it evident that, in order
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to enjoy any interest in, or intimacy with SERM.
II. God, we must undergo a thorough renovation of the heart. But, as one view which Christ had in his humiliation was, to open for us a door of access to God as our father and friend ; so, by making effectual provision for our sanctification, he hath removed every impediment which might keep that door shut against us. Holiness is an essential part of the salvation which he came from heaven to bestow. If we are chosen in him, it is, *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in *love.* Christ gave himself for the church, *that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.* He sends his Holy Spirit to convince of sin, to discover the beauty of holiness, to purify the heart, and to regulate the conduct. The change which is thus wrought by the Spirit of Christ is so effectual, that it overpowers the natural bias of the mind, and makes them who before were regardless of

* Eph. i. 4. and v. 25, 26.

SERM. II. God, to desire nothing so much as conformity to his will, and the enjoyment of his smiles.

BUT all the christian's privileges and possessions have respect to a future state. It is not in this world that he is to obtain the full accomplishment of his desires ; but in a better. He is at present a minor, for whose immediate wants are granted supplies, suitable to the dignity and wealth which he is to possess, when he comes to a more mature age. He is now a pilgrim in a strange land, where many inconveniences must be borne : but ere long he will arrive at his Father's house, and take possession of *an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.* Christ is gone into heaven as *our forerunner*, and in our nature, to prepare a place for our reception. A little before his departure from the world he said to his disciples, *I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be*

be *also. But who can describe the blessedness, to which the christian is heir? A SERM.
II.
city, whose foundations and walls are garnished with pearls, and all manner of precious stones, whose guards are angels, whose streets are of pure gold, in the midst of which are the river and the tree of life, and where nothing can enter that defileth or worketh †abomination! The society of just men made perfect, communion with angels, and the presence, and the smiles of God! How delightful! how glorious is the prospect! This prospect, my christian brethren, is yours. The very intention of Christ in becoming poor, was, *that ye through his poverty might be rich, rich in grace here, and in glory hereafter.*

It is not unworthy of notice, that St. Paul speaks of the doctrine which I have now advanced, as a thing universally known in the christian church. *Ye know, saith he, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The knowledge of the gospel was not in-

* John xiv. 2, 3. † Rev. xxi. 12, &c.

SERM.
II.

tended to be confined to the ministers of God, or to any particular order of men. Religion is a science, the essential principles of which are suited to the capacities of all. It is a road, in which the wayfar- ing man, though a fool, cannot materially err. The scriptures lie open to every one. Therefore, if any man be ignorant of the principles of christianity, his ignorance must be wilful and criminal. What then must we think of those persons who, though they profess to be christians, are incapable of giving any reasonable account of the method of salvation, or of the ground on which they build their eternal hopes, and who turn away from the fountain of sacred knowledge, perhaps with disgust. Surely their state is dangerous! If there be such characters in this assembly, consider, I beseech you, the misery of your condition. If you have no acquaintance with the gospel, whatever other knowledge you may possess will avail nothing towards your salvation. May God
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in mercy open your eyes before it be too late!

S E R M.

II.

BUT suffer me to exhort you as christians to adore and praise the manifestations of redeeming mercy. We can never think too highly or too honourably of the Son of God. That he should become poor, in order to make us eternally rich, is grace indeed. O let us give way to the warmest emotions of gratitude. Let our lips incessantly pour forth his praise. If we have, in any degree, experienced the happy effects of Christ's humiliation, language will ever be deficient in expressing our grateful feelings; and our feelings will ever fall infinitely short of what his grace deserves.

To conclude, I would invite you to the imitation of the compassionate Saviour. I would say to each of you, *Go, and do thou likewise*. I do not call upon you to become poor that you may enrich others: but I wish you to give, as a grateful offering to God, a part of what he hath bountifully bestowed upon you. Look around you.

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S E R M.
II.

Many of your neighbours are perhaps labouring under the want of those comforts which you largely enjoy. They have a claim upon your hospitality. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to assuage the sorrows of the afflicted, when done from a proper principle, are ranked among the most sublime christian duties. May these and other works of mercy be our employment and our delight, till we enter that world where every tear shall be wiped away, and our souls shall be wrapped up in the immediate fruition of God!

S E R M O N III.

The TREASON of JUDAS.

(Passion Week.)

MATTHEW XXVI. 45.

Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

IT was said by the prophet Jeremiah, SERM.
III. that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* This declaration exhibits a very humiliating picture of human depravity ; nevertheless it is strictly and universally true. Every faculty of the souls of men is polluted with sin ; and the contagion of the heart has broken forth into innumerable actual violations

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S E R M.
 III.
 } lations of the laws of God. Unawed by the supreme authority, and the justice of the Most High, and unaffected by his goodness, men habitually give a loose to sinful and destructive appetites. Or if they aim at any thing that is called virtue, it is chiefly at those duties which they owe to each other, and not at that reverential homage which is due to the Supreme Being.

BUT one of the highest points to which the sinfulness of human nature can possibly attain, is to shew a disregard to him, without whose mediation we should be irrecoverably lost. By sin the whole posterity of Adam was exposed to destruction, but the Father of mercies *so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting *life.* It might have been reasonably supposed that when the promised Messiah should come into the world, he would be received with joy.

* John iii, 16.

Sacred history however informs us that *when he came to his own they received him* SERM.
III.

**not*. •He was treated with indignity by those whom he came to redeem ; and then closed his eyes in a tumult of public scorn. The enraged Jews persecuted him where-soever he went, and desired to put him to death with all the terrible formalities of justice and law ; but the accomplishment of their intentions was suspended awhile by an overruling power, because their hour was not yet come.

SATAN in the mean time had a spy in the Redeemer's camp. He stirred up Judas, one of the twelve, to enter into a covenant with the chief priests, to put the Son of man into their power. Jesus Christ having supped with his disciples, Judas left them in order to prepare himself for effecting his plot, and the blessed Jesus with the other disciples, retired to a garden whither they had been accustomed frequently to resort, and which was called Gethse-

* John i 11.

S E R M.
III.

mane. As soon as they had entered this place, Jesus, knowing what was about to happen, began to be sorrowful and very heavy ; and he selected three of his disciples to attend him to another part of the garden to watch with him, and to pray. But important as that hour was, they could not keep themselves awake. The Saviour was inveloped in the most awful agony and distress. Thrice he roused his disciples from sleep, and thrice he sought relief from God in fervent prayer, while the drops, or rather the thick clots, of blood forced their passage through the pores of his skin. When he rose up from prayer, he informed his attendants, by way of reproof, that they might then sleep on, and take their rest. The opportunity of assisting him in his devotions, which he had wished them to embrace, was now past. The storm now blackening around him, and there being no possibility of retreating from it's fury, Behold, saith he, referring to the hour of darkness and of divine permission, *Behold, the hour is at hand,*

hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. While he was yet speaking, the traitor Judas, who was previously acquainted with the place of his master's retreat, came with a band of armed men, and approaching the Saviour with an air of friendship, said, Hail, Master! and gave him a salute. That kiss was fatal. It was the signal by which Jesus Christ was pointed to those who were to lead him to the slaughter, and was the means of plunging the soul of the traitor into the lowest hell. This act of Judas is a very considerable circumstance in the passion of our Lord: it shall therefore be the subject of the present discourse.

It is observable that by this transaction an innocent person was delivered up to cruelty and oppression. The life of Jesus Christ was, strictly speaking, a life of piety and innocence. As an individual, his soul was impressed with the most exalted sentiments of piety towards the Eternal God. He was inexpressibly wise, and humble, and holy. Even the prince of darkness

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himself,

SERM. II. himself, with all his cunning, could not draw him into the commission of any one sin. In his relative character as a member of society, he exhibited the social virtues in all their native dignity and lustre. In him every impartial eye might perceive the dutiful son, the peaceable subject, and the steady and affectionate friend. As a public minister of religion, he taught nothing that was contrary to the institutions of civil government, or that was inimical to the jewish law. He did not invade the rights nor the happiness of mankind: he was the father and the friend of all. Whithersoever he went, his only aim was to do good. Yet all his piety and goodness, instead of being esteemed and applauded, was, by the treachery of a false apostle, delivered up to the barbarous indignation of scornful men. Had he been a traitor to his country, or an enemy to mankind he would have been deservedly an object of public vengeance. But what had he done to merit such treatment? Feeding the hungry, healing the sick, instructing the

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the ignorant, comforting the distressed, SERM.
III.
were these the crimes of which he might be convicted? Alas! how great must be the guilt of that man, who could devote such innocence and such usefulness to utter destruction!

BUT innocence and usefulness did not suffer alone in this case. The sacred laws of friendship also were violated, and her authority treated with gross contempt. There is in real friendship a certain delicacy or sensibility which it is difficult to describe. He whose soul is capable of so exalted a disposition feels every pain which his friend suffers, and would sooner expose himself to torture than do him any wilful injury. Judas had found this disposition in Jesus Christ, and had experienced its happy effects. Christ had selected him from amongst the multitude, to be one of his more intimate companions. We must necessarily imagine, that in such a situation, he received from Christ many a kind word of instruction, and enjoyed many a real token of friendship and esteem.

SERM.
III.

teem. Nay, he had no small share of confidence reposed in him; for he was appointed the treasurer of the whole apostolical society, and constantly carried the purse. It might justly have been expected that such tenderness and condescension on the part of Christ would have met a proper return, and that Judas would have been ready upon every occasion, to defend his Master from the rude insults of a contemptuous world. But the ungrateful man bursts asunder the most endearing ties of friendship, betrays the Son of God, and basely exposes him to oppression, and torture, and death.

IN that hour Jesus Christ saw his doctrine and his interest wounded in the house of his professed friends. Judas, in this part of his conduct, discovers a vile contempt of the whole of Christ's undertaking. By becoming a disciple of Jesus, he professed to believe and approve his doctrine, and cordially to embrace his salvation; and, virtually at least, engaged to promote his cause. But though he took upon him

him a profession of christianity, he remained a total stranger to that internal change of heart, which is absolutely requisite to our salvation. He did not know that he was a poor perishing sinner: nor did he see his need of Jesus as a Saviour. While he continued in this state, he could not but be an enemy to the truth; for *the carnal mind, as the apostle saith, is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can *be.* There is that in the scriptures of truth which is disgusting to human pride; and till that pride be subdued, and the heart be filled with contrition, no man, whether he be a professor of religion or not, will ever cordially approve or embrace the gospel of Christ. But Judas, though he was an enemy to his own best interest, and to that of all mankind, did not care to avow his hatred openly, till he should have an effectual opportunity of smiting the Shepherd, and of scattering the sheep. As

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* Romans viii. 7.

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soon however, as a moment that was favourable to his purpose presented itself, he discovered that, notwithstanding his professed attachment to the gospel of Christ, his inhuman soul was capable of treating the Saviour as a vile impostor, and of trampling with disdain upon the everlasting salvation of the human race.

THIS dark design of Judas was accomplished by means of the most artful and consummate hypocrisy. He had indeed acted the part of a hypocrite during the whole time of his continuance with Jesus Christ; but his hypocrisy in that action which we now contemplate, more particularly attracts our notice. He not only betrayed the Son of Man into the hands of sinners, but he did it under the mask of affectionate regard: he betrayed him with a kiss. Perhaps he intended by that salutation, to express a seeming sorrow that the officers were about to apprehend his master, or to affect a more than ordinary attachment to him at that season. Thus the best appearances have sometimes been assumed,

assumed, in order to cover the most base and treacherous designs. Hypocrisy, S E R M.
III. wherever it is found, is truly detestable; but when it is employed to betray the innocent man, the friend and Saviour of mankind, the Lord of heaven and earth, even language itself becomes utterly incapable of describing its tremendous guilt.

ONE cannot help observing that this treason was not the consequence of any sudden temptation, but the result of cool deliberation and forethought. We are informed that Judas had covenanted with the chief priests, to deliver his master into their hands in the absence of the people. If any thing could have lessened his crime in our view, it must have been the circumstance of a sudden temptation to so rash an action. We know that human nature is frail, and that even good men may be tempted to commit the greatest of crimes. But in the case of Judas there is no room for such plea. Some whole days must have passed between his making the agreement with the chief priests, and the fulfil-

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fulfilment of that engagement. He had time for reflection, and his thoughts were actually employed on the subject: for the evangelist declares that he *sought an opportunity* to betray Jesus Christ. To what an amazing degree of impiety must that man have attained, who, while he professed to be a follower and friend of Christ, could coolly and deliberately resolve to take an active part in his murder! To what treatment was the Son of God obliged to submit, in order to accomplish the great work of human redemption!

WERE we to enquire into the motive of this detested action, we should soon discover that it was a principle which hath no small influence over the general conduct of mankind. It was that principle which an infallible writer expressly declares to be *the root of all *evil*. St. John informs us that when Jesus was at Bethany, Mary the sister of Lazarus, anointed his feet with some very costly ointment. Judas

* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

was offended at this supposed waste, and said, SERM.
III.
*Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put *therein. And from that time, as we are informed in the chapter which contains my text, he sought to betray the Redeemer. It is evident that he was a covetous man, and that his love of money was so inordinate as to prevail over every consideration of justice, and friendship, and truth. In fact, he made every principle and every consideration subservient to this; insomuch that, even when he betrayed the blessed Jesus, it was for a stipulated sum. Wretched creature! he entirely disregarded that important query, What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Regardless of those durable riches which the gospel bestows, he bartered them away for the gratification of the present moment.*

* John xii. 5, 6.

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It had been good for that man by whom the Son of man was betrayed, if he had never been born. In the whole of his existence, misery outweighs enjoyment : so that, if by not being brought into existence, he would have been deprived of a certain proportion of happiness, he would also have avoided a much larger proportion of wretchedness and pain. But alas ! the guilty man hath existed. He lived to betray the Lord of glory ; and then, feeling the awful sting of an alarmed and awakened conscience, he madly rushed into the society of damned spirits, and took up his last, his eternal residence, in horrors and in flames.

SUCH was the treachery and cruelty of a man, who, for a time, called himself a follower of Jesus ; and such the beginning of those sorrows, to which the Saviour of the world was exposed. Yet we ought not to imagine that Jesus Christ was under any deception when he called Judas to be his disciple ; for he *knew from the beginning who they were that believed not,*
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*and who should betray *him.* No evil SERM.
III. could happen to him but by the express permission of God; none but what he himself foresaw, and, if he had been regardless of our salvation, could have avoided. But Judas was suffered to act thus that divine grace might triumph over his treachery, by making it instrumental in bringing about the eternal felicity of a perishing world.

BUT let us not employ the whole time of this service in expressing our disapprobation of the man by whom Christ was personally betrayed. In every later age there have been persons in the christian church, who have too closely imitated the conduct of Judas, and who, it is to be feared, will be sharers in his ruin. The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners, not indeed literally and personally, for that is now impossible, but by that treachery in his service which is calcu-

* John vi. 64.

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lated to undermine the interest of real religion and truth.

As the author of christianity hath given to his church a perfect system of divine truth, it is an act of presumption in men to add to, or to diminish from his word. Yet how commonly do they, by falsely representing to themselves and others the way of salvation, act as traitors to the Son of God? There are some who profess to believe the truth, and to be the disciples of Christ, who nevertheless degrade the glorious gospel, and reduce it to a system of mere pagan morality. In order to appear as the friends of Christ, they make mention of his name, talk highly of his morals, and yield a sort of obedience to some of his precepts. They keep themselves free from notorious immorality, they perhaps shed a tear before God as an acknowledgment of their faults, they perform some acts of charity, they probably pay a decent attention to the external forms of religion, and cultivate the principles of honesty and honour, so far

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as those principles may engage the attention and the praise of men : and all these things they lay up in store, as the price of their eternal redemption. The grand distinguishing truths of the gospel, and the vital influence of those truths upon the heart, they utterly disregard. The free grace of God as the sole cause of salvation, the atonement of Christ, and the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart, are truths which, except as subjects of mere speculation, find no place in their creed. They profess to know and love the Saviour, and yet they refuse to trust their salvation in his hands. While they thus wound the honour of Christ, and, as much as in them lies, undermine the grand system of redemption, they give us too much reason to suspect that, if they had been situated as Judas was, they would have acted the same part.

OTHERS there are who, under a profession of supreme attachment to Jesus Christ, live in direct opposition to his commands. They talk of religion, of the love of God,

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and of the glorious doctrines of grace; but in their practice they are loose, dissipated, and profane. Amongst them you may perceive a disregard to the honour of the christian profession in themselves, and perhaps violent condemnation of the same vice in other persons. Promises given, and flanders spread, without regard to truth, want of strict honesty in their transactions, implacable resentment of real or supposed injuries, and various other inconsistencies, stain their lives; and induce the world to conclude that religion is a farce, and that all its professors are hypocrites. Some of these characters, in order to preserve an appearance of consistency, profess to have learned from the gospel itself, that, because *they are not under the law, but under grace*, they are freed from all obligations to strict obedience. They *sin that grace may abound*. But, what is this, but a perversion of the truth? Such persons, under a pretended concern for the Redeemer's honour, stab the interest of religion in it's most tender part. I acknowledge

knowledge that the salvation of sinners is the fruit of sovereign grace; but, if we are chosen of God to salvation, it is *through sanctification of the Spirit, as well as belief of the truth.* The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. The intention of Christ in the gift of the gospel is, to make men happy by making them holy: but, by the bad conduct of some who are called christians, that intention is often exposed to contempt,

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THERE are many who do not indulge themselves openly in the practice of immorality, who nevertheless are real enemies to the interests of holiness, and the cause of Christ. They aim at uniting two things, the union of which is impracticable, the love of God, and the love of the world. They have so much of religion as makes them pass in the croud for good men, and so much of the spirit of the world as enables them to shun the cross.

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In company with serious and godly people they are grave, in company with other descriptions of men they are light and frothy. They profess to be seeking a better world, and yet they discover a strong predilection for this. They blot the profession of christianity, not with notorious crimes, but with little conformities to the temper and customs of worldly men. Hence the companions which they principally chuse and delight in, are persons of a gay and dissipated turn; and the pleasures which they chiefly pursue, are those of the theatre, the gaming table, the useless pastime, or the sportive song. In pretence they are wise men, acting from motives of religious prudence; but in reality they are the slaves of a corrupt nature, and the enemies of Jesus Christ.

A VARIETY of other cases might be described, all tending towards the same point; but these are quite sufficient to show that Judas, though gone *to his own place*, hath left too much of his spirit amongst us, and that the Redeemer is, even now, often kissed

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ed by the persons by whom his interest is betrayed. SERM.
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WHEN men, under a pretended concern for religion, thus run to extremes, the unwary are deluded, and Satan's interest receives fresh strength. The truth is, that salvation is the free gift of God, through Christ Jesus, and that holiness is an essential part of that salvation which the Supreme Goodness freely bestows. It is said concerning the happy partakers of salvation, *there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more *work.* In this passage the apostle positively excludes the works of men from being the meritorious cause of their salvation. In another place he saith, *God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just and yet the justifier of him who be-*

* Rom. xi. 5, 6.

SERM. *lieveth in *Jesus.* Thus it appears that
 III. *finners are justified in the sight of God by*
an entire dependance upon the righteousness of Christ, and not by the deeds of the
law. And yet, without real holiness no
 man can be saved; for, as St. James justly
 observes, *faith without works is †dead.* If
 we make any pretensions to religion, we
 should be able to justify those pretensions
 in the sight of all. Barely to *say* that we
 are christians is not sufficient: we must be
 able by solid evidence to *prove* and to jus-
 tify our claim to that honourable appella-
 tion. Now this cannot be done, but by
 the works which we perform. To this
 remark agrees the saying of the apostle,
 that *Abraham was justified by works, when*
he had offered Isaac his son upon the ‡altar.
 The patriarch did not obtain acceptance
 with God by his § works; for they were
 imperfect; yet he evidenced by them to
 the world that he was a partaker of justify-
 ing faith. Even in the solemn day of

* Rom. iii. 25, 26. † James ii. 20. ‡ James ii. 21.

§ Rom. iv. 2, 3.

judgment, the reality of our union to Christ must be proved by the fruit which we shall have been enabled to bring forth. When the great Judge shall welcome his servants into his kingdom and glory, he will also assign as the reason, *I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me : for inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me.* SERM.
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UPON the whole then you perceive that something more than a moral life is necessary to constitute us christians ; that there are truths to be believed, as well as things to be done ; and that in the gospel, faith and holiness are inseparably united. Our good works are not the price of immortal felicity : but they are the only solid evidence, by which our title to that felicity can be proved. Let us therefore not torture the sacred writings, but receive them

* Matt. xxv. 35, &c.

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as they lie before us.^X Let us not hurt the Redeemer's interest, nor attempt to stain his glory, lest, like Judas, we should be convicted of treason against the Son of God. If by our principles or our conduct we should mislead our fellow creatures, what must be our doom? Let us fear lest the sovereign Judge should hereafter say to us, While ye professed to believe my words, ye betrayed my cause, and betrayed the precious souls of men to their and your eternal ruin. *Depart from me, ye wicked, for I know you not.*

LASTLY, let us guard against every inclination to a covetous temper. *Godliness with contentment is great gain.* But when men suppose that *gain is godliness*, they will make every thing around them subservient to their ruling passion. They will trifle with religion, and conscience, and heaven, and hell; and, for the sake of filthy lucre, they would, in the true spirit of Judas, even betray the Son of man into the hands of sinners. It is a melancholy consideration that covetousness should

should be so prevalent as it is, even amongst those who profess to be weaned from the world. The liberality of many is nothing more than empty vapour; it constantly eludes the grasp. When the cause of Christ calls for generous exertion, they have always at hand some carnal excuse. Such persons ought seriously to examine whether they would not even sell the truth for the sake of temporal advantage. Let us *not seek great things for ourselves*. If we gain them by improper methods, perhaps, like Judas, we shall not be able to keep them. If we hold them with too close a hand, they will operate like poison. Let us therefore be *content with such things as we have*; for the Saviour hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake *thee*. In the pursuit, and in the use of temporal enjoyments let us be moderate, in imparting them to others let us be liberal; always remembering that *the Lord is at hand*.

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* Heb. xiii. 5.

S E R M O N ·IV.

ON PETER'S DENIAL OF CHRIST.

(Passion Week.)

LUKE xxii. 61, 62.

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter ; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

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WHEN David the king of Israel experienced the treachery of Ahitophel, he exclaimed, *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it ; neither was it he who hated me that did magnify himself against me ; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man,*

*a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in *company.* He was stung by the unkindness of some whom he loved: and in this he was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. He found that the bitterest rage of an enemy was much more tolerable than the unkindness of a professed friend. The faithless conduct of a man to whom we are united by the closest ties of friendship goes to the quick: it wrings the most painful groans from the heart, drenches the eyes in scalding tears, and rends asunder the whole frame.

IN that memorable day when Jesus Christ was arraigned at the bar of Pilate the roman governor, Pilate, as much as his weakness would allow him, opposed the popular cry which the wicked Jews had raised against the Saviour, and attempted to deliver him from their fury. If Pilate, who was a professed idolator,

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and who knew nothing of Christ, but from common report, and from his examination of him as a prisoner, thus ventured to stand up as his friend, what might not be expected from his own disciples? They had been his intimate companions. They knew all his conduct, and were acquainted with the disposition of his heart. It was in their power to give the clearest and most decisive testimony in the behalf of degraded innocence and goodness. Would they not then unite their most zealous endeavours to vindicate their injured and insulted master? What was their conduct on that trying occasion? Alas! overcome by confusion and terror, as soon as he was apprehended they all forsook him, and fled. Two of them indeed, John and Peter, followed him to the palace of the high priest. John, overwhelmed perhaps in grief, beheld with silent sadness and indignation the barbarity of the people. At a little distance from the judgment seat, Peter stood amongst the servants of the high priest, and denied his dying friend.

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He was unwilling in that moment of distress to have it thought that he was a disciple of Christ. When the compassionate Saviour was just about to die for Peter, Peter treated him with the utmost cruelty and disrespect. But *the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* What, my brethren, does the look of Jesus Christ imply? It speaks powerfully, not to Peter's ear, but to his inmost soul. God grant that every one here present may this day feel that contrition which the eye of Jesus communicated to Peter's heart.

THE Son of God, though he came into the world to give the knowledge of salvation, and the remission of sins, was treated by the ungodly as if he had been the bitterest enemy of mankind. He was exposed to opposition, and insult, and scorn. But these indignities he bore with unexampled meekness. When sinners

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ners smote him on the one cheek, he turned to them the other. He opened his bosom to receive the invenomed darts of persecution : and when led to prison and to death, *as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* From his avowed enemies nothing but cruelty could be expected. Therefore, though he felt the stings of malice, yet he did not complain. But Peter's crime gave a keener edge to those sorrows which pierced the Redeemer's soul ; and increased the bitterness of that cup which Christ was doomed to drink. The cup was full before : this addition made it overflow. When Jesus Christ perceived this, he turned his plaintive eye towards his frail disciple, as if to expostulate with him. Mark his countenance : how furrowed with grief ! I imagine I hear him say, Peter ! Peter ! What *thou* too ? Dost *thou* abandon me in this hour of trial ? *Is this thy kindness to thy friend ?* Where is now thy promised fidelity to me ? Where is thy boasted attachment to my service ? Dost thou
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unite with my betrayers and murderers?—

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- O, 'tis insupportable!—Let me die.

THE countenance of Jesus Christ was full of eloquence and energy. It spoke the language of complaint and grief: but this was not all; for it carried the most powerful conviction to Peter's breast. That glance of the Saviour's eye Peter could not withstand. It disarmed him, and broke his heart, and thus made way for the operations of deep repentance. The sight of the officers and foldiers, the horrors of persecution, and the terrible prospect of his Master's ignominious death, had given a shock to Peter's faith, and had spread over his hopes a thick dark gloom: but the countenance of Jesus Christ, like a light shining through the gloom, discovered to him the awfulness of his situation. It roused him to solemn recollection, and to all the painful sensations of guilt. *He remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.* He called to remembrance his crime, together with all

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the successive aggravations with which it was attended. He had denied his connection with his God and Saviour. This crime contained in it an awful mixture of ingratitude, and cruelty, and falsehood. Whether we consider the principles from which it proceeded, or mark it's progress, it will exhibit a melancholy proof of human weakness and depravity.

PETER's denial of Christ evidently proceeded from the powerful influence of fear and shame. We cannot impute it to the absolute want of sincere affection to Jesus Christ. He had given many undeniable proofs of his hearty attachment to his Master's service. His zeal in that service had sometimes carried him even beyond the bounds of discretion. When Christ was apprehended in Gethsemane, Peter drew the sword in his defence. But as the prospect of danger increases, our frail nature is apt to shrink. As soon as persecution had fully unfurled and hoisted her bloody flag, Peter was dismayed. He saw and was alarmed at the dangers which threatened.

threatened. He feared to follow Christ SERM.
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in the rugged path of difficulty, and trembled at the prospect of being set up by the unfeeling multitude as an object of ridicule and scorn. These things quite overwhelmed his courage, deadened every noble and generous feeling of his heart, and made him ashamed to undergo even the slightest suspicion of being a disciple of the persecuted Saviour. It is comparatively an easy thing to walk in company with Christ while danger stands aloof, and while the world will suffer us to pass on unheeded and unnoticed. But the appearance of difficulty, and the dread of disgrace have stripped many a man of his confidence, and have made many a professed disciple of Christ go back, *and walk with him no *more*. Peter himself, for a time, felt their influence forcibly. Hence he positively denied his having any knowledge of Jesus Christ.

THIS crime was in a particular manner aggravated by the circumstances which at-

* John vi. 66.

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tended it's commission. If Peter, like a mariner crossing an unknown and dangerous sea, had met with unexpected shipwreck and ruin, he would have escaped our censure, and would have excited universal pity. But he was forewarned of his danger by his best and dearest friend. Jesus Christ had with the utmost tenderness and affection pointed out the rock, against which this frail man was likely to be dashed. In a conversation which just before the apprehension of Christ passed between him and his disciples, he said to them, *All ye shall be offended because of me this night.* Peter replied, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Lord I am ready to go with thee both into prison, and to death.* Then it was that Jesus said unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me *thrice.* A proper attention to the weakness of human nature would have taught the apostle that this caution was worthy of regard. It

* Matt. xxvi. 31, &c. and Luke xxii. 33.

was still more so, as proceeding from a friend, to whom his welfare was inexpres- SERM.
sibly dear. However, as he then saw no IV.
danger near, and as, being too confident in his own ability, he supposed that, if danger should approach, he could firmly maintain his ground, he slighted the friendly warning. But when men slight the counsels of Jesus Christ, it is attended, not with hazard only, but with certain loss. We may, in some instances, act as if we thought ourselves wiser than Christ, but this presumption is a tree which will yield only bitter fruit. And if through our presumption we sin and suffer, we are without excuse; because Christ hath forewarned us of the dangers to which we are liable. Had Peter trusted himself less, and Christ more, he would in all probability, when the moment of trial came, have avoided a fall. But he carelessly and presumptuously dared the unequal contest, and became an easy prey to the tempter.

WHEN Peter was awakened to a proper sense of his fault, he was stung no doubt

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with the recollection that it contained a notorious violation of the promises of inviolable fidelity, which he had given to Jesus Christ. Just before the last dreadful scenes of the Redeemer's life were opened, Peter, as I have already mentioned, said to him, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,* He farther added, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny *thee.* In this manner he pledged himself even to sacrifice his life, if necessary, in vindicating the honour of Christ, and in promoting his cause. These vows, though at that time rashly made, were in themselves not rash, but serious and important. A solemn dedication of ourselves to the service of Christ, and a readiness to lay down our lives for his sake, are duties which the gospel requires, and to which grace habitually inclines us. By taking upon us a profession of religion, we virtually bind ourselves to an entire devotion of our souls, and bodies, and every thing

* Matt. xxvi. 35.

we possess, to the Lord Jesus; and on some occasions, especially on our approaching the Lord's table, we more expressly renew and ratify our vows. We meet with various temptations to depart from these voluntary engagements; but every departure from them is an actual violation of that fidelity which is due to Christ. Peter had certainly been taught that a strict regard to truth is an essential part of the disposition and character of the real christian. Yet, when danger stared him in the face, and his fidelity was put to the proof, he threw away his integrity, and burst asunder the solemn ties by which he had bound himself to his dying Lord.

YES it was from his *dying* Lord that Peter separated himself. To avow a connection with Christ when he was riding into Jerusalem amidst the acclamations of the multitude, required no effort of grace; it was but gliding along the popular current. But that current is perpetually shifting its course. Jesus Christ, once the
G 4 favourite

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favourite of the people, became afterwards the object of their fury. Then it was that Peter was carried out of his proper track. The season was an important one. It required in the disciples of Christ a manly steadiness and courage. But at the very time when, humanly speaking, Jesus Christ stood most in need of the kind offices of Peter, Peter disowned him. Christ had willingly surrendered himself as a sacrifice for Peter's salvation, and was giving him the strongest possible proof of his affection, by submitting to ignominy and to death for his sake: but at that instant Peter would not know him. Just when the Redeemer was beginning to sink under the enormous load of human guilt, Peter added another weight to make him sink the deeper. Good God, of what perverseness is our nature capable!

THE offence of Peter was rendered more heinous by being accompanied with passion and blasphemy. The unhappy man denied the persecuted Saviour with oaths and angry imprecations. When suspected of
of

of being a follower of Christ, he was not S E R M.
IV. only fearful, but highly offended. Rather than let the ungodly see that he was a christian, he chose to imitate their wickedness. He cursed and swore that he knew not the *man. Perhaps, like some profane wretches in the present day, he called for curses and damnation to light upon him if he had any knowledge of Christ. But it was well for him. it is well for many, that God does not immediately take them at their word. Profane swearing has a powerful tendency to rouse the divine vengeance. Happy are they to whom repentance is given.

It not unusually happens that a good man, when through the hurry and the violence of temptation he has been drawn into sin, immediately feels the smart, and flies for refuge to a pardoning God. The christian cannot contentedly remain amidst the noxious vapours of sin. He longs to breathe a purer air, and to enjoy a brighter sky : he wishes to get near to God. He

* Mark xiv. 71.

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is restless and uneasy tills he feels afresh the reviving beams of the Sun of righteousness. But this was not the case with Peter. His offence was aggravated and rendered more notorious by it's repetition. Between each time of repeating his fault there was sufficient space for recollection and repentance. The second commission of it was some little time after the first ; and *about the space of an hour after* it was repeated again. During this time his heart seemed to be destitute of every impression that was serious and useful. Nay, his ability and his resolution in committing the crime apparently increased each time of it's repetition. On comparing the accounts which the evangelists give of Peter's fall, it seems highly probable that the first offence was a simple denial of Christ, the second was accompanied with an oath, and the third with bitter imprecations.—But hark! the cock crows. See the Lord turns and looks upon Peter. What beams of efficacy dart from the eye of Jesus Christ into the breast of this poor back-

backsliding disciple ! That look is the channel of conviction. Peter's heart is full, too full for utterance. The awful tear of repentance, impatient to gush from his eye, forces him to a place of retirement. He goes out, and weeps bitterly.

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THE Saviour's eye, like a sword, pierced the heart of Peter, or rather, like an instrument in the hand of a skilful surgeon, it opened the wound, only to pour in the healing balm of mercy, and to effect a cure. The look of Jesus Christ was a look of sovereign compassion. Peter wept ; but his tears were not like those of Esau, who had totally lost his birthright and his blessing : he wept bitterly ; but his streaming penitence was not the wild offspring of despair : it was the effusion of a contrite and gracious heart. Sin had raised an awful tempest round about him, and the roaring billows went over his head ; but he perceived that there was a rainbow in the cloud. He had been accustomed to hear words of kindness from his Master's lips ; and he probably recollected that
before


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before his fall Jesus Christ had said to him, *Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail *not.* Such a declaration as this had a powerful tendency to encourage and support him under his trouble. Besides, the compassionate countenance of Jesus Christ added new force to his former expressions of regard. Peter felt now what he had only heard before; and acquired a more experimental knowledge of his own frailty, and of the worth of Jesus as a friend and Saviour. Hence he went out of the high priest's house, not like Judas, to plunge himself into destruction, but to give vent to that *godly sorrow*, which *worketh repentance unto salvation*, and which is *not to be repented of*. He *looked upon him whom he had pierced; and he mourned* and wept. What a picture of christian humiliation is exhibited here! Observe his flowing tears. Listen to the solemn expressions of his grief. Oh, wretched, wretched man! What have I done? Alas! I have pierced the soul

* Luke xxii. 31, 32. † 2 Cor. vii. 10.

of him whom I love. I have added S E R M.
 bitterness to his dreadful sufferings. Is IV.
 there—can there be mercy for me? O
 that look!—What compassion! Let me—
 Let me bathe his feet with my tears.—Ah
 Peter! well mayest thou mourn: but thy
 Saviour can forgive. The scripture saith,
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou
*wilt not *despise.* Sin hardens the heart;
 but grace breaks, and softens, and melts
 it. It is a happy thing for a sinner to lie
 prostrate before the mercy seat. The bit-
 ter pangs of repentance are themselves
 more truly satisfactory than the greatest
 worldly possessions; and they will assured-
 ly issue in the enjoyment of inexpressible
 and unfading felicity. Such was the ex-
 perience of Peter. He fell; but he was
 raised again. Notwithstanding his offence,
 he sincerely loved the Lord Jesus; and
 therefore he might with propriety say, *Re-*
joice not against me, O mine enemy, when I
fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness,
the Lord shall be a light unto †me. Jesus
 Christ did not *spea*k to Peter at the time of

* Psalm li. 17. † Micah vii. 8.

S E R M. his transgression ; but he looked unutter-
 IV.  able things. He determined to stop the progress of Satan, and to rescue Peter from the jaws of ruin. He virtually said to the tempter, *Hitherto shalt thou come but no further*. Then the power of Christ triumphed over that of Satan. The poor backslider was not left in the condition to which sin had brought him : he was delivered, *as a bird out of the snare of the fowler*. Peter had wandered from the Lord ; but he could find no rest for the sole of his foot, till he returned again to the ark. There he found rest and safety.

FROM what is recorded in scripture of this apostle's life, it appears that his fall was overruled by the wisdom and power of Christ, and made really serviceable to him through the whole remaining part of his pilgrimage. Till this melancholy event took place he knew not his own weakness. He was told of it indeed, but he could not believe it. Hence he was too subject to rash confidence and pride. The young christian, whose eyes are just opened, sometimes wonders to hear older men complain
 of

of their weaknesses and fears. He imagines that he could do or suffer almost any thing for the sake of Christ. But let him have a little more experience, and he will be convinced that he cannot, by his own power, stand even for one moment. After that period in Peter's life, of which I have spoken, we perceive no symptoms of his former vanity. Imperfections indeed he had as long as he lived: but by painful experience he learned the truest wisdom, and acquired the possession of real humility. He found that self was too feeble to support his hope, and therefore went through life leaning on the arm of his beloved Saviour.

BUT to whom do I address myself? It is possible that there may be some backsliding Peter here to day, some poor deluded mortal, who, after having made a profession of religion, after having associated himself with such as fear God, and after having *tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*, hath turned again to this evil world, as the
fwine

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. { swine that was washed turns to her wallow-
 ing in the mire. Poor unhappy creature!
 What ; did you find any thing in the ser-
 vice of the Redeemer that was disgustful to
 your taste ? Did you find him to be a se-
 vere master, requiring hard service with-
 out granting you suitable support ? Did
 you discover that he was unable to fulfil
 those glorious promises which he had set
 before you ? Do you find that the sinful
 courses of this world can afford you a
 more substantial peace, or more desirable
 pleasures, than the service of Christ ?
 Those pains and horrors which you have
 felt since you began to slight the gospel of
 salvation, what do they declare ? O let
 your own experience convince you that
it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have
forsoaken the Lord your God. Happy were
 it for you, if Jesus Christ would now more
 spiritually look upon you, and fill you with
 deep repentance : happy, if, like Peter,
 you might be led to weep over your of-
 fences bitterly. But perhaps you have not
 actually proceeded so far in your depar-
 ture

ture from God. You are still professedly SERM.
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travelling towards the land of promise, and are supported by the heavenly manna. Yet in your hearts you are looking back, and are lusting after *the melons, and the leeks, and the garlick of Egypt*. You sometimes almost regret that the gospel requires you to renounce the spirit and the maxims of the world. Hence you are tempted to taste the forbidden fruit of worldly pleasure: and hence too, upon some occasions, you lose your courage, and become ashamed to avow yourselves the disciples of Christ. Look around, I beseech you. Consider where you are, and what you are about. Remember that *no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of *God*. Call to mind those delightful seasons which you have heretofore spent in communion with Christ. Consider the misery into which you are now fallen. While you wander from God, he will make you feel that *they who observe living*

* Luke ix. 62.

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IV. } *vanities forsake their own *mercy.* O then
return unto the Lord your God. Intreat
him to take away your iniquity, and to re-
ceive you graciously.

If you be really sensible of your wretchedness and guilt, permit me to remind you that Jesus Christ is full of tenderness and compassion. Though you have treated him as being unworthy of regard, though you have slighted his word, and violated your solemn vows, and disgraced your profession, yet if for these things, your hearts be humbled and broken, you shall find that Christ is not unwilling to save you. When Peter had brought himself to the verge of destruction, the Saviour *plucked him thence, as a brand from the burning.* And even now *his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save.* For the encouragement of those who return to him with weeping and supplications, he saith, *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them †freely.* Ye mourning sinners, cast away your fears, and take comfort. Whoso-

* Jonah ii. 9. † Hosea xiv. 4.

ever cometh unto him, *he will in no wise cast out.* SERM.
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}

LET us however beware of presumption. Many, when they read or hear of the backslidings of good men, persuade themselves that the occasional allowance of sin is compatible with an uninterrupted hope of salvation. But let us not deceive ourselves. There can be no stronger proof of being in a state of awful reprobation than such a wilful abuse of the divine mercy. It is easy to rush into Peter's crime : but how can we assure ourselves that, if we do rush into it, we shall possess Peter's repentance ? My brethren, *be not high-minded : but fear. Take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day of temptation. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

S E R M O N V.

On the SUFFERINGS of CHRIST, as an
ATONEMENT for SIN.

(Good Friday)

ISAIAH liii. 5.

*He was wounded for our transgressions, he
was bruised for our iniquities : the chast-
isement of our peace was upon him, and
with his stripes we are healed.*

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V.

MY brethren, no doubt you have ob-
served that the ministers of the gos-
pel frequently endeavour to attract your
notice, and to rouse your piety, by dis-
playing the various *excellencies* and *plea-
sures* of religion. To day I am going to
reverse this plan ; and to lead your atten-
tion

tion through scenes of distress, of horror, and of blood. The subject of our present contemplation is the sufferings which were inflicted upon the Son of God, and under the weight of which he sunk down in the abyss of death. SERM.
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THAT the chapter whence my text is taken refers to the sufferings of the Messiah, we have the strongest and most incontestible proof. In this manner it was expounded by the evangelist Philip to the ethiopian *eunuch : and the very passage itself, which I have read, was applied by the apostle Peter †to Jesus Christ. It was with the greatest propriety that the writers of the new testament made such an application of this prophecy : for no person, except Jesus of Nazareth, hath ever existed, to whom the whole description which the prophet gives could possibly apply. Of him it is here predicted, that he should be *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, that he should be *despised and rejected of men*, that he should

* Acts viii. 32. &c. † 1 Pet. ii. 24.

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be *oppressed and afflicted*, that he should
pour out his soul unto death, and be num-
bered with transgressors. As there was an
absolute certainty that these sufferings
would be inflicted, so they are described
as having actually taken place. Since the
prophet's time his predictions have been
realized. The great Redeemer hath been
wounded, and bruised, and exposed to
vengeance, and to death, for the trans-
gressions of his people. Let us therefore
take a view of the exact situation in which
the illustrious sufferer stood.

THE sorrows and afflictions of Christ
might be properly considered, in connec-
tion with other events, as a noble confir-
mation of the truth of the gospel. We
cannot conceive that any man would be
willing to lay down his life in defence of
a doctrine, of the truth of which he was
not fully persuaded. Now, though men
may mistake error for truth, or may be
led away by strong delusions, yet Jesus
Christ hath given so many proofs of his
profound wisdom, yea, even of his essen-
tial

tial deity, that we cannot reasonably sup- SERM.
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}
pose him to be under any mistake. Besides, he taught his disciples to expect that he would lead them to the very source of supreme felicity. And when we recollect that death, though attended with its utmost terrors, could not induce him to alter, in any measure, his designs and promises of mercy, it greatly encourages us to put an implicit confidence in all he says; it convinces us that the gospel is founded, not in imposition, but in grace and truth.

I MIGHT further call upon you to consider the suffering Redeemer as a noble example of patience and constancy in times of affliction and persecution. While we continue in this evil world, we must expect to be sometimes afflicted by the immediate hand of providence, and sometimes, because of our adherence to the gospel, to be treated by men of corrupt minds with unmerited contempt. In either of these cases it is an unspeakable mercy, not only to be taught the nature

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and expediency of resignation, but to have that disposition beautifully exemplified in the behaviour of Jesus Christ. During the whole time of his distress he did not utter a murmuring word, nor discover any sign of impatience. Even when he prayed for deliverance it was with due submission to God ; for he added to his request, *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* How ought this to check our impatience, and to make us with silent resignation adore the unerring providence of God ?

BUT I do not propose to treat my subject generally. I shall confine myself therefore to that particular view of the Redeemer's sufferings, which is given by the prophet in the words of my text. It is evident that he here considers and describes them as a real and complete atonement for sin. If Jesus Christ was *wounded and bruised*, it was *for our transgressions*. His chastisement is the price of our peace ; and by his stripes our spiritual maladies are healed. The meaning of these expressions

preffions is that Chrift did truly and properly suffer in our stead; and that, in virtue of his sufferings, all who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel, obtain from God pardon and peace. This doctrine, though condemned by some pretended moralists as an absurdity, is perfectly consonant to right reason: and is one of the fundamental truths of the gospel.

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I TAKE it for granted that God hath an indefeasible right to govern the world, and to demand of all intelligent beings the most absolute obedience and submission to his will. He is the most glorious of all beings whatsoever. He is infinite and unchangeable in wisdom, power, justice, truth, goodness, and every perfection. From him we all have received our existence. Surely then it is fit and proper that he should give law to his creatures, and that they should be subject to his authority.

I FURTHER take it for granted, that it is highly reasonable and becoming in the great Governor of the world to maintain

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an inviolable regard to the honour of his government. What should we think of that government where every one might at his pleasure, oppose the supreme power; where the dutiful subject could not enjoy protection; and where crimes, even the most enormous, might be committed with impunity? Under such a government no sensible honest man would wish to live. In fact, it would be no government at all: it would be a system of disorder and confusion. Therefore it follows that God's right of governing is necessarily connected with the right of punishing the guilty.

In the next place, reason itself must allow that God hath a sovereign right, provided that society receives no detriment thereby, to punish transgression, either in the sinners own person, or in the person of a competent surety. Some have rejected the christian doctrine of atonement, under the pretence that it is unjust to punish the innocent instead of the guilty. Indeed to *compel* an innocent person to suffer for crimes which he never committed is an

act of cruelty. But this is by no means the case of him who bled for the transgressions of his people. He became their substitute in the most *voluntary* manner. And he had a right so to do : for though no mere human being has a right to lay down his life at his own pleasure, yet the Son of God was absolutely at his own disposal. Hence he said to the Jews, *I have power* (that is, right, or authority) *to lay down my life, and I have power to take it *again.* I acknowledge that in earthly governments such a substitution might be dangerous, because it could not provide for the offender's reformation, and if it could, society would sustain a loss in the innocent victim. But in the divine government the case is otherwise. Jesus Christ laid down his life ; but he took it again : and he hath made the most effectual provision for the sinner's actual conversion from sin to holiness. Here then society receives no injury : it acquires additional strength and felicity. And Christ himself, *for the suf-*

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* John x. 18.

SERM. *fering of death is crowned with glory and*
 V. **honour.* Every person who impartially
 considers these things must be convinced
 that the appointment of such a substitute
 in the room of guilty men, hath nothing
 in it unreasonable. But as the appoint-
 ment of a mediator is an act of sovereignty,
 and not of necessity, our reason could ne-
 ver discover whether God would appoint
 one, or not. For the knowledge of this
 we are entirely indebted to revelation.
 Let us now view the subject by the light
 of scripture.

By the sacred oracles of truth we are
 taught, that man was originally *made up-
 right*, but fell into disobedience and mi-
 sery, and that together with him fell all
 his posterity. So that all are now natu-
 rally prone to transgression, and liable to
 wrath. David, in the book of †psalms,
 and St. Paul, in his epistle to the †Romans,
 unite in saying of the human race, *There
 is now righteous, no not one: there is
 none that understandeth, there is none that*

* Heb. ii. 9. † Psalms xiv. and lxxi. ‡ Rom. iii. 10. &c.
seeketh

seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one. This is the state in which all men continue till they become truly regenerate. Education, the restraining power of God, and the absence or presence of temptation, may make a difference in the external behaviour of different persons; but nature is alike in all. The proud moralist, as well as the profane harlot, is a sinner. Does any one enquire how we became thus prone to evil? I answer in the words of the apostle, *By one man's disobedience many were made *sinners.* In the covenant of works Adam was considered as the representative of his posterity; and by his transgression he hath involved them all in misery and guilt. Let no man blame this constitution of things. If Adam had persevered in obedience, (and he might have done so,) all would have admired, all would have applauded such a covenant. And the nature of the cove-

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* Rom. v. 19

SERM.
V. } nant is not in itself the worse for man's transgression. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Yes, verily. It becomes us therefore to *be still, and to know that he is God.*

GUILT and punishment are connected. God hath revealed himself to us as a being, *Who will by no means clear the *guilty.* The holiness and justice of God's nature require that sin should be punished. Consequently, as we are all become guilty, we are all naturally under condemnation, and exposed to wrath. As sin is committed against him who is infinitely worthy of our regard, so it's demerit is usually said to be infinite, and it's punishment, which is chiefly reserved for the future state, is described in scripture in the most awful and affecting manner. From these circumstances it appears that an atonement is absolutely necessary in order to our obtaining a pardon. Either we ourselves must suffer the dreadful penalties of God's

* EX. xxxiv. 7.

law, or some person who is competent to the task must suffer them for us. SERM.
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I AM now led to observe that Jesus Christ actually suffered on the behalf, and in the stead of sinners, or in other words, that the prophet spoke the truth, when he said of Christ, *He was wounded FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, he was bruised FOR OUR INIQUITIES: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* This is uniformly the doctrine of the scriptures. To say nothing of the typical œconomy of Moses, which every where prefigured the offering of a sacrifice which could take away guilt: read the whole chapter which contains my text. There you find these expressions. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. For the transgressions of my people was he stricken. By his knowledge shall he justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.* Read that expression of the apostle, **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, BEING MADE A CURSE FOR US.*

* Gal. iii. 13.

Read—

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Read—But it would be an endless task to refer you to all the proofs of this doctrine. Without a perversion of these passages from their plain meaning, they cannot be considered otherwise than as declarations of the reality of Christ's atonement. If men will not believe these testimonies, *neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

THAT the atonement of Christ is sufficient and complete, we have the evidence of St. Paul. He says of Christ, *After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, he for ever sat down on the right hand of God: for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are *sanctified.* He hath obtained a free pardon for all who ever did, do now, or shall hereafter believe on his name. But the value of his sacrifice exceeds our comprehension. Never were the awful glories of justice so eminently displayed, never was the divine displeasure against sin so forcibly exhibited, as when God armed himself with terrible vengeance

* Heb. x. 10-14.

against his beloved Son. Surely sin must
 • be *exceedingly sinful*, or the Lord of glory S E R M.
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 would never have undergone what he did,
 to redeem us from it's guilt. If Christ had
 never suffered, we might have doubted
 the propriety of those judgments which
 are denounced against the wicked; but
 now we are convinced that the infliction
 of them is necessary and just. We are
 also taught that, by the substitution of
 Christ in the sinner's place, the divine *law*
is magnified and made honourable, and
 consequently, that God is more glorified
 thereby than he could have been by our
 eternal condemnation.

BUT, standing in our place, what did
 he suffer? Let us take a nearer view. If
 we just glance our eye on his walk thro'
 life, we shall perceive that it was, gene-
 rally speaking, a rugged and thorny path.
 Wealth and splendor refused to admit him
 into their doors. He was doomed to such
 a situation in life as men naturally wish to
 avoid. Weariness, and poverty, and want,
 were his daily companions. Now we be-

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hold him in a dreary wilderness, exposed to hunger, and assaulted by strong temptations. Now we see him singled out as the butt of malice, and loaded with infamous reproaches. At one time, resting his weary limbs on the brink of a well, he is obliged to ask of a profane Samaritan a drop of water to quench his raging thirst. At another time a miracle is necessary to enable him to pay tribute to Cesar. In short, the birds and the beasts might boast that their accommodations were superior to his: *for the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.*

SOMETIMES it happens that when the sky, during the greater part of the day, has worn a lowering aspect, the evening becomes pleasant and clear. We have seen this remark verified in human life. It was not however the case with Jesus Christ. Those distresses which I have already mentioned were but a prelude to what he was afterwards to suffer. They
were

- were like the straggling drops which fall before a storm. SERM.
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THE Saviour, having celebrated his last supper with his disciples, and seeing the clouds gathering round him, retired to Gethsemane, in order to prepare himself, by solemn addresses to heaven, to sustain the impending shock. In this situation his soul was filled with horror. It was not that horror which is excited by a consciousness of guilt : it was that aversion from suffering, which our nature, even in it's most perfect state, must feel, and which he felt in all it's force. *O my Father ! said he, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* And, as if his very soul would have forced out it's passage to the world of spirits, to seek a shelter from the storm, large drops of blood issued from the pores of his skin, and falling to the ground, stained it with a crimson dye.

Now the awful moment arrived, in which the powers of darkness were let loose like beasts of prey. Scarcely had the distressed Jesus risen up from prayer,

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when his foes entered the place of his retreat. A band of men, armed with hostile weapons, as if about to apprehend some lawless desperate assassin, was sent by the chief priests and the elders of the people to seize his person. But the meek and lowly Redeemer, though he could instantly have obtained *twelve legions of angels* to assist him, suffered his enemies to lead him *as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his *mouth.*

LET our thoughts follow him to the seat of justice. The seat of *justice*? Where shall it be found? As if it were difficult to find a judge hardy and wicked enough to condemn him, he is hurried to Annas first, next to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate. The tongues of the wicked are hired to *lay to his charge things which he knew not.* What malice dictates every expression! Where are now those multitudes who so lately

* Isaiah li. 7.

filled

filled the air with hosannas, and who cried before him, *Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord?* Will they not stand up to protect him? Alas! they are eagerly joining in the cry, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* Where are now his chosen friends, his twelve disciples, who so lately avowed their firm resolution to stand by him in his extremity? Dreadful reflection! by the treachery of one he is betrayed, by another he is disowned with bitter curses, by all he is forsaken, and abandoned to wretchedness and grief. In vain does the inconsistency of his accusers appear in open court. In vain are the ominous dreams of Pilate's wife. In vain does the innocence of the venerable prisoner make itself manifest. Malice triumphs over innocence; and the Son of man is doomed to a painful and ignominious death. The wicked judge, departing from the maxims of righteous judgment, feels his heart assaulted by unusual pangs, while with a pale countenance and trembling nerves, he signs the

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fatal warrant of execution. Thou wretched
perverter of justice! where is the boasted
energy of the roman government? Can
it not resist the clamour of a tumultuous
mob?

BUT what are the preparations for the
Saviour's death? Is he not assisted in his
last moments by some humane priest? Ah
no! See him in the hands of the barbar-
ous soldiers, who, to gratify their rage,
invent circumstances of barbarity till then
unknown. They array him in mock ma-
jesty, they pierce his sacred temples with
a crown of thorns, and bow the knee
before him in derision. He is spitted on,
smitten, insulted, and made the ridiculous
sport of devils in human form. Now they
lead him out, as a malefactor, to the place
of execution. According to the roman
custom, he carries his cross: but, over-
come with fatigue, he faints under his bur-
den. His enemies, eager to glut them-
selves with blood, hurry him along, and
compel a stranger to bear his cross.

ARRIVED

ARRIVED at the fatal spot, they extend his limbs, and nail them upon the cursed tree, amidst the cruel acclamations of indignant men. How dolefully the hammer sounds! Death rides in every stroke. How his limbs are mangled and torn! Lift up your eyes, my brethren, to Calvary, and see your Saviour languishing in all the awful solemnities of death. There hangs the Lord of eternal glory. What human heart does not shudder at the sight? The sun, as if ashamed to behold his Creator in such ignominy, hides himself, and refuses to shine: and the heavens assume a mourning dress. Here, the scornful priests and elders load him with reproaches. There the occasional traveller wags his head as an expression of contempt. The thieves who are crucified with him insult him in his distress: and they who stand by mock his thirst by offering him vinegar mingled with gall. In these tragical circumstances he turns his eyes towards heaven, where he had often found an asylum in distress;

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but not one gleam of comfort can he obtain thence. The eternal God has clothed himself in dreadful vengeance. Jesus Christ feels all the terrors of divine wrath, and in the bitterness of his soul he cries out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—Hark! how awful is that groan! It tears the veil of the temple, opens the graves, and rends the rocks. See; again he just lifts upwards his languishing eyes, he bows his head, and expires.—Now death rides his pale horse in triumph, and boasts that the Son of God hath fallen a victim to his stroke.

THESE dreadful pangs the Saviour endured in the behalf of every sincere believer. While he was yet upon earth, he assured his disciples that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting *life.* The vain pharisaical man who imagines that his pretended righteous deeds are to be the price of his redemption, has no solid

* John iii. 16.

evidence that Jesus died for him. Indeed SERM.
V. with his present disposition he can have no } just value for the atonement of Christ. It must appear to him as a thing scarcely needful. They also who, regardless of real piety, live in the habitual practice of evil, have no just reason to conclude that their guilt is washed away by the Redeemer's blood. He died for such only ^{through} ~~as~~ ^{turn} to him with hearty^x repentance, and with true faith. Come then, ye poor trembling sinners, come to the merciful Jesus. Prostrate yourselves at his feet; and lay before him your sorrow and your wants. Do not doubt his ability to save you: for though he fell a victim, yet in falling he conquered death and hell, and he will hold them in everlasting subjection. Do not question his goodness. He groaned and died for your redemption. What greater proof of his love can you require? Come with all your unworthiness, and poverty, and guilt, and wash in the pure fountain of his blood, and be clean. In that you will find a balm for the wounded conscience,

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conscience, and a remedy for all your sorrows. By the stripes of Christ all your spiritual maladies shall be healed; by his chastisement you shall obtain eternal peace.

WHILE we recollect that the Redeemer's sufferings are the price of our redemption, it ought to fill us with the deepest humiliation. *Ye are not redeemed, saith the scripture, *with corruptible things, as silver and gold.* The wealth of the whole creation is not sufficient for the ransom of one sinner. Neither can the blood of bulls, or of goats, take away our guilt. We are redeemed *with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.* O that we may ever retain an humble sense of the vast obligations under which we are laid! Our sins fastened the Redeemer to the fatal cross. While we look on him let us mourn to think what sin hath done.

YES; it was *sin* that crucified the Saviour. Can we love that which murdered

* 1 Peter i. 18, &c.

the Son of God, and which, if it had not, SERM.
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would have plunged us into eternal ruin? }
God forbid. Let us hate it in all its
forms. Let us pray, and watch, and
strive continually against it. O may the
Father of mercies deliver us from its
power, and conduct us to the mansions of
purity and blessedness! There, if we be
really his disciples, we shall see him who
bled for our salvation, seated on a throne
of glory. There, we shall unite with the
spirits of just men made perfect, in *saying*
with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that
was slain to receive power, and riches, and
wisdom, and strength, and honour, and
glory, and blessing, for evermore.

S E R M O N VI.

On the EXPEDIENCY of the SUFFERINGS of CHRIST.

(Good Friday)

HEBREWS ii. 10.

*It became him for whom are all things, and
by whom are all things, in bringing ma-
ny sons unto glory, to make the Captain
of their salvation perfect through suf-
ferings:*

S. L. R. M.
VI.

IN order to obtain just ideas of that
wonderful system of redemption which
is contained in the gospel, it is necessary
that we trace out it's origin, and thence
proceed to mark it's progress towards
final consummation. Long before time
had

had any existence, God formed those SERM.
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wise counsels which produce the various {
events that take place in this world. The
full accomplishment of his designs is reserved for that period, when the angel shall *lift up his hand, and swear by him who liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer.*

NOT to dwell upon the connection in which my text stands : it is sufficient just to observe that as many of the Jews entertained very gross and carnal ideas concerning the Messiah, and concerning his kingdom, St. Paul attempts to rectify their mistakes. They imagined that he was to be, not an abject sufferer, but a glorious temporal prince, and that he was to give them freedom from servitude, and dominion over the nations. Whereas the apostle teaches them that the intention of God was to redeem them from sin and misery, and to establish them in the possession of that inheritance, of which the earthly Canaan was only a type or figure.

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IN my text the Divine Being is mentioned as one who hath a sovereign right to do what he pleases. *For him are all things, and by him are all things.* For the good pleasure of God all created things exist, and by his power they were originally brought into being. As God is the most glorious of all beings whatsoever, it is highly proper that he should make his own glory the ultimate end of all his proceedings. This is the spring of all the various revolutions which take place in the course of providence, and the source of our eternal salvation. And by what means soever his purposes are accomplished, it is he who gives those means all their energy.

ST. PAUL speaks also of a grand design which God had formed, which was, to bring *many sons unto glory*. This design includes both his adoption of them as his children, and his giving to them an inheritance. We are not, in the usual sense of scripture, the children of God naturally, but spiritually. We are made so indeed

deed professionally by baptism ; but it is SERM.
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grace alone which makes us so in reality. }

God, by his Holy Spirit, regenerates us, and makes us partakers of true faith in Christ, and thus brings us into his family, and gives us the power*, or right of becoming his children, and of claiming an interest in him as our Father. Together with the title, he confers on us all the rights and privileges of his children. Hence the apostle saith, *If children then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with †Christ.* God graciously intends to give to all his children a goodly inheritance : not an earthly Canaan flowing with milk and honey, but a heavenly one abounding with the fruits of the tree of life. Or, to use the language of my text, he purposes to *bring them to glory.*

WITH a view to the accomplishment of this design, Jesus Christ is appointed to be the Captain of our salvation. The appellation here given to Christ conveys an idea of difficulties and obstructions in the

* John i. 12, 13. † Rom. viii. 17.

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way to glory. This idea is perfectly conformable to the general language of scripture, and to the experience of all good men. The world, and sin, and Satan, are all inveterate enemies to the children of God. It is through many a fore conflict that the christian soldier makes his way to heaven. But Christ is the Captain of his people; he is their Commander in chief. He saves them from their enemies, and leads them on to victory, and to glory. Yet, in order to his taking possession of his supreme dignity, as Head of the church, and to his being perfectly qualified to save his people, it was necessary that he should abase himself, and become obedient to death; that he should be consecrated to his office by sufferings and by blood.

THIS part of the counsel of God hath been already fulfilled. Jesus Christ hath fully performed the painful condition, on which the salvation of his people depended. He veiled the essential glories of his Godhead in human flesh. He embraced

braced a life of poverty, and ridicule, and pain. *For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the *shame* with which it was connected. He continually went about doing good: but, in proportion as he multiplied his acts of kindness to men, their opposition to him increased. He patiently bore their insults and scorn. At length the powers of darkness are let loose upon him. Earth and Hell conspire together to drag him to utter destruction. As if he were a notorious thief or murderer, he is taken into custody, and bound with thongs. The tongues of falsehood are hired to stab his reputation, and to take away his life. His adversaries, not content with the usual forms of law, add to their persecution all the bitterness of rage. They inflict upon him punishments, which neither the jewish nor the roman laws ever imposed upon the vilest offenders. They spit in his face, they strike him with the palms of their hands, they crown him with thorns, they

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* Heb. xii. 2.

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VI. insult him with cruel mockery, and set him up as the object of unfeeling contempt. Having at length exhausted their invention in the exercise of barbarity, they lead him, covered with wounds, and blood, and marks of infamy, out to Calvary, and fasten him to the fatal cross.—O my God, what an awful tragedy is here exhibited to view! What do our eyes behold? See, my brethren, the Son of God struggling with all the horrors of a shameful execution. The infatuated mob load him, in his dying moments, with reproach and scorn. The inanimate creation feels a sympathetic shock; while men, fired with infernal rage, do their utmost to render the Saviour's agonies more exquisitely bitter. The angels of God, as if smitten dumb and motionless with surprise, now forbear to minister to his wants. The adorable Majesty of heaven, whose gracious presence had often filled the soul of Christ with serenity and joy, now looks down upon him with frowning vengeance. Dreadful situation! His cries and groans
rend

rend the air. In pangs unutterable he bows his head and dies.

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SUCH was the path by which God required that Jesus Christ should go to the possession of his dignity ; and such the preparations necessary to qualify him for being a complete Saviour. I am aware that it might be asked, If the sufferings of Christ were the effect of a divine purpose or decree, why are the men who accomplished that decree charged with blame? My brethren, I confess that I am not equal to the full investigation of so profound a subject. In the scriptures, the Redeemer's sufferings are ascribed both to the purpose of God, and to the wickedness of men. The apostle Peter, speaking of Christ, says, *Him being delivered by the detrminate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and *slain.* On the one hand, I cannot impute the rage, and malice, and barbarity of the persecutors of Christ to the Divine Being : for the ideas

* Acts ii. 23.

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which I form of his perfections are such as forbid me to suppose that he is the author of sin. On the other hand, I cannot conceive of any event as coming to pass without some interposition of an over-ruling providence. But how or where to draw the line between the influence of God and the actions of men I know not. None of the decrees of God destroy the liberty of the human will. The murderers of Christ followed their own inclinations as freely as if they had been opposing, instead of accomplishing, the divine intentions. However, I can easily persuade myself that God, who is infinitely wise, can interfere with even the most wicked actions of men, in such a manner as neither to contract any stain, nor to become the author of any man's sin, or of any man's destruction. Instead of indulging a vain curiosity in the contemplation of such subjects, it becomes us rather to exclaim with St. Paul, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable*
are

are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Yet, we may discover, that, so far as God took any part in the infliction of Christ's sufferings, he acted with wisdom and propriety: we may see that *it became him*, that is, it was highly expedient for him, *in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

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WHEN Peter drew his sword in Gethsemane, to defend his Master against those who were about to apprehend him, Christ informed him, that, if it were expedient, he could soon have the assistance of angelic beings. *But, saith he, how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* Here then we perceive that one reason why Christ should suffer was that the prophecies might be fulfilled. *God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* The prophets had largely foretold the suf-

* Matt. xxvi. 54.

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ferings of Christ, it was therefore necessary that they should be inflicted : for the word of God cannot fall to the ground.— But here the question returns upon us, Why were they foretold at all ? And why were they originally appointed ? Upon this subject the scriptures afford ample information.

It was highly expedient that he who was to be the Captain of his people's salvation, should be acquainted with all the difficulties and snares, to which they might at any time be exposed. It has sometimes been the case with good men that *through much tribulation* they entered the kingdom of God. Many of them have been laid under the necessity of laying down their lives in defence of the *truth*. To such a state of trial Satan well knows how to suit his devices. Some of the temptations which the confessors and martyrs of Christ have endured, have sprung more immediately from the dangers to which they have been exposed. Now as it is necessary for him who commands an army to have experience

ence in warlike concerns, and in the stratagems of an enemy, so it was expedient that Jesus Christ, who was appointed to lead his people to conquest and to glory, should know experimentally the various devices of Satan. It is true, that, as God, he can see with one glance every artifice of the grand enemy of our souls. But Jesus Christ considered as *God only* is not our Saviour. It is God *incarnate* who must lead us to heaven. Therefore it was proper that in his human, as well as in his divine nature, he should be fully acquainted with those conflicts and snares to which we are liable.

To be more particular. It is fit and proper that he, who was appointed to be the Saviour of his people, should likewise be able to sympathize with them, and to help them in every circumstance of distress. A strong proof of this arises from our own feelings. If we only hear of the distress of a fellow creature, we may indeed feel emotions of compassion towards him: but we cannot fully sympathize with

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him, nor know how exquisite his sorrows are. But if we ourselves have felt the same distress, we quickly enter into his views, and our bosoms feel a thousand benevolent sensations which otherwise we could not have known. In this manner the scripture speaks of the sufferings of Christ. *We have not, saith the apostle, an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* And as he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them who are tempted.* The christian, when labouring under sore trials and fiery temptations, derives no small encouragement from the recollection that his compassionate Saviour hath experienced the same conflicts, and knows what kind of relief is most suitable and proper.

IN accomplishing the work of salvation, it was expedient and fit that Jesus Christ should also set before us an example of that part of religion which is peculiar to a

* Hebrews 13. † Hebrews 18.

state of affliction. All the graces and virtues of the Holy Spirit are implanted in our hearts, at our first conversion to God: yet it is a fact, not only that some of those graces are peculiar to the present life, but also that the wintry blasts of adversity are necessary to their nourishment and growth. If we feel no pain, we have no need of patience. If we meet with nothing to cross our inclinations, there can be no room for self-denial, nor can our submission to the will of God be complete. Indeed it may be said of all the christian virtues, that they receive their highest polish from afflictions. Trials are necessary to our preparation for the heavenly state. The apostle Peter saith, *Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus *Christ.* In the bear-

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* 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

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ing of trials we are naturally unskilful and weak. It is necessary therefore that we should be, not only instructed by precept, but encouraged by example. Now, of all examples, that of Christ is the most likely to prevail. When we hear the high commands of heaven, their excellence we admire, but in the performance of them we fail. But when we see Jesus Christ pressing forward to glory in the face of opposition and danger, when we see him enduring the most dreadful sufferings with humble patience, and with the most entire resignation, when we hear him, in the behalf of his murderers, saying, *Father, forgive them*, we feel sensations which I cannot describe. With this lively pattern in view, we can smile at distress, we can even glory in tribulation. The primitive teachers of christianity animated their suffering brethren by reminding them of the Redeemer's sorrows. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example,*

*ple, that ye should follow his *steps. He for* SERM.
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the joy that was set before him, endured the
cross, despising the shame, and is set down
at the right hand of the throne of †God.

IF we consider further the weakness of human nature, and the many obstacles which there are to the proper exercise of faith, we must judge it highly reasonable that God should give to his people the strongest possible evidence of his affectionate regard. This he hath done. The most convincing proof of divine love that could be given, was exhibited on the cross. God foresaw that our salvation would be attended with the expence of the tears, and groans, and blood, of his beloved Son; and he determined that the price should be paid. This was not a debt due to our merit: it was an effusion of disinterested love. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* The remembrance of this strengthens our faith, and animates our hope. *For if when we were enemies,*

* 1 Pet. iv. 1 and ii, 21. † Heb. vi. 2.

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*we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son: much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his *life.* The disciples of Christ may boldly say, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all †things.* In this display of the love of God the trembling sinner finds deliverance from his guilty fears; and by it the christian is encouraged to place the fullest confidence in God.

BUT as divine love always acts in concert with infinite purity and rectitude, so it was expedient and right, that in the salvation of sinners, God should give the world a striking manifestation of his inviolable regard to holiness and justice. If we all, in our own persons, had suffered the due punishment of our transgressions, we should indeed have seen the terrors of divine justice; but we might have concluded that it's demands were too rigorous, and that it would have reflected no dishonour on the Almighty if he had set

* Rom. v. 9, 10. † Rom. viii. 32.

them aside. But such presumptuous and sinful reasonings are put to silence by the cross of Christ. The awful and bloody transactions of Mount Calvary convince us that the punishment of sin proceeds from the immutable holiness and rectitude of the Divine Nature. In no other instance whatever hath God given so clear an evidence of his righteous and eternal hatred to sin, as in punishing it in the person of his own Son. This evidence it became him to give, lest those who wilfully continue in sin, should indulge the hope of being happy in a future state. If we would enter the kingdom of heaven, we must become new creatures in Christ Jesus: *for there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's book of *life.* God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, he cannot look upon iniquity: therefore, with him an unrenewed sinner cannot have any communion. They who chuse sin as their

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* Rev. xxi. 27.

SEPM. portion in this life, must expect misery as
 VI. their portion in the next.

As the holy and righteous God designed to bring his people to glory, it was expedient, that he should provide a suitable atonement for their sins. The justice of God requires, that they who stand convicted of rebellion against him, should not be admitted into his glorious presence. But this is the case of every man. It is written, *We all have sinned, and come short of the glory of *God. We were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in †sin.* Hence we are *by nature the children of wrath*: we are condemned by the law, and made liable to the awful consequences of transgression. Unless reparation be made, our guilt must eternally shut us out of heaven. But we ourselves cannot make this reparation. We cannot attain to that, which it is our duty to do: much less can we make any atonement for our offences. Therefore it is manifest, that, *by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in the*

* Rom. iii. 23. † Psalm li. 5.

*sight of *God.* But what could *not* be done by the law, God hath done for us by his grace. He made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Our sins were charged to the account of Christ, as if he had committed them in his own person, and he bore the vengeance which they deserved. In like manner, his righteousness is placed to the account of every believer. We perceive, then, that the substitution of Christ in the sinner's place hath opened the way for the exercise of mercy. There is nothing in the nature of God, or in his government, to prevent the salvation of him who believeth in Jesus. The law, and the holiness, and the justice of God, do actually concur with mercy in advancing the christian to glory.

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SEEING that such valuable and glorious purposes are answered by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, while, with Caiaphas, we acknowledge, that it was *expedient that one man should die for the people*, let us

* Rom. iii. 20. † 2 Cor. v. 21.

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VI. learn reverentially to adore that Being, who is terrible, even in the brightest displays of his mercy. At the beginning, when God commanded the various parts of the creation to exist, they sprang into being, through the power of his word, in a moment. All nature was obedient to his command, *the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.* Serenity and pleasure were spread through the universe. But when he said, Let hell shut her mouth, and let yonder guilty rebels be pardoned, and exalted to glory, at that word of mercy an invisible hand rends the solemn veil of the temple; the creation is hid in darkness; earth trembles to her centre; the rocks are rent: the grave, as if surfeited with mortality, yields up her dead; and the Son of God, crushed by the hand of vengeance, expires in bitter pangs. *O Lord! who is like unto thee among the Gods, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?* Surely, my christian brethren, when we enter the house of God, and engage in
his

his appointed worship, we ought to banish from us every vain thought, and trifling disposition: we ought to recollect, that *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.* A superstitious or slavish dread of him is foreign to the true spirit of christianity; but a respectful awe of the Divine Majesty is always needful and becoming.

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LET those agonies, which Jesus Christ endured for us, further teach us to bear cheerfully any sufferings for his sake, to which we may be exposed. The men of this world are now what they always were, the enemies of real goodness. Just before our Saviour gave himself up to his murderers, he said to his disc'ples, *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* And, even to this day, it is not unfrequently

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quently seen, that those who dare to confess Christ before men, are defamed and despised. The path which leads to glory may be thorny and rugged; but it is safe. By the cross is the right way to the crown. O then, *consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.* Let us remember what he bore for us. Then we shall chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin: and we shall esteem the reproach of Christ, as a greater treasure than the wealth of the whole world. For, if we suffer with him on earth, we know that we shall also reign with him in heaven.

S E R M O N VII.

On the EVIDENCE of the RESURREC- TION of CHRIST.

(Easter Day.)

ACTS v. 32.

*We are his witnesses of these things ; and
so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath
given to them that obey him.*

SOMETIMES it is brought as a charge S E R M.
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against the disciples of Christ, that
their faith is too implicit ; that they too
readily admit as religious truths, things,
of the reality of which they have no suf-
ficient evidence. This charge however,
may be easily shewn to be without foun-
dation ; and consequently it will fall to

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VI. } the ground. It must be confessed, that, considering the false mediums, through which, even objects of importance are sometimes viewed, caution is needful, and especially in those enquiries which relate to our eternal salvation. All true faith is founded on evidence ; and, this being the case, it will, in the day of trial, stand the severest test. As it is at our peril, that we reject any divine truth, so we should be careful, not to receive any thing as such, but what may be proved by the oracles of God. Yet, if any of the contents of those oracles be capable of receiving additional evidence of their truth, from nature, from history, or from reason, we ought, as far as we are able, to obtain that evidence. It will increase the stability of our faith and hope.

OUR contemplations have been recently engaged by the terrible solemnities of Mount Calvary, and the death of Jesus Christ. At the close of that affecting tragedy his body was deposited in a new stone vault belonging to Joseph of Arimathea,

thea, a pious jewish counsellor. It seems that his disciples now abandoned their hopes, and were on the point of renouncing their religious profession, or, at least, of returning to the secular employments, in which they had been formerly engaged. They had trusted indeed, that Christ *was he, who should have redeemed Israel*: but by his death they were thrown into the utmost confusion; *for as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.* But, to their astonishment and joy, in less than forty hours from the time of his death, the Saviour returned again to life. He died in the afternoon preceding the jewish sabbath, and rose again very early in the morning after the sabbath. When we are informed, that he rose on the third day, we must understand it according to the jewish mode of reckoning, that is, inclusively. According to ours, it would have been the second. This fact, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, forms an interesting part, not only of sacred history, but of christianity

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itself.

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itself. It is a link in the chain of redemption, without which, the whole must be disjointed and broken. It is a corner stone in the christian system of doctrine. If you take away this, the whole system itself will be *like a city, that is broken down, and without walls*. I grant that this is not the only fact, to which my text refers: the apostle speaks of the ascension, as well as of the resurrection of Christ. But the discussion of both these subjects at once, would lead me beyond the usual limits of a sermon. I shall therefore confine myself to that, which is more particularly appointed to be the subject of this day's commemoration. Peter and the other apostles, addressing themselves to the jewish senate, boldly said, *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. And we, that is, the apostles and other disciples, are his witnesses; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him*. Let us examine into the credibility of their testimony.

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THE Saviour's resurrection from the dead is repeatedly and expressly declared in the scriptures; insomuch that, to deny this fact, is, to deny the authority of those writings, and to become infidels by profession. This event was foretold in ancient prophecy. David, in the sixteenth psalm, personating the Messiah, said, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* In some parts of the new testament this passage is expressly applied to the resurrection of Christ; and any other application is virtually forbidden. The apostle Peter speaks of it thus. *The patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see *corruption.*

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* Acts ii. 29, &c.

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The prophet Isaiah also, speaking of Christ, saith, *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his *days.* Now Christ could not become a victim, and at the same time shun the stroke of the avenger of sin. Consequently, he could not prolong his days, but by being raised again from death. In a similar manner spoke several of the Jewish prophets concerning the Messiah. And Jesus Christ himself informed his disciples, that it was necessary, that he should *suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third †day.* Likewise, just after his transfiguration, as he came down from the mountain, he charged those of his disciples, who were with him, saying, *Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the ‡dead.* He also foretold his resurrection to the multitude at large. *Destroy this temple,* saith he, speaking of his body, *and in three days I will raise it §up. I lay*

* Isaiah liii. 10.

† Matt. xvi. 21.

‡ Matt. xvii. 9.

§ John ii. 19.

*down my life that I may take it *again.* SERM.
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These predictions did not fall to the ground: they were actually fulfilled. From the third day after our Lord's crucifixion, it was declared by the apostles and others, that he had actually risen from the dead, and their testimony was confirmed by many collateral circumstances, and by the Holy Ghost himself. The evidence of these witnesses, as it will bear the strictest scrutiny, so it is worthy of universal credit and acceptance.

THESE primitive christians must have had the strongest reasons for what they affirmed concerning the Saviour's resurrection, or surely they would not have espoused a cause so extremely unpopular and hazardous as was theirs. To become the propagators of such a report, was not the way to honour and wealth. It was morally impossible, that, in such a cause, they should enjoy the protection of the civil or ecclesiastical powers, or that, by such a conduct, they should obtain the

* John x. 17.

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friendship of the learned, or access to the coffers of the rich. On the contrary, the gates of dignity and ease, even if open to them before, would now be effectually shut and bolted against them. Indeed, on account of their attachment to the cause of Jesus Christ, they already appeared sufficiently ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Under such circumstances, no man, in his senses, would have ventured upon the propagation of a report that Christ was risen, if it were untrue, because this was the direct way to draw upon himself a still larger share of popular contempt. Besides, supposing that Christ were not risen, his disciples must have been fully convinced that he was a deceiver; and consequently, could have had no expectations from him as the Redeemer of Israel. But they were supported by a consciousness of the truth of what they said, and they placed the fullest confidence in the almighty power and goodness of Christ. Therefore, at the risk, or rather, at the certain expence, of character,

character, of ease, of profit, and of every thing, which men hold dear, yea, even of life itself, they proclaimed from sea to sea, and from shore to shore, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had with wicked hands crucified and slain, had burst the barriers of the tomb, and had risen triumphantly from the dead.

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NEXT to their peculiar situation, the nature of the evidence, which these persons give, presents itself to our notice. Of the truth of the resurrection of Christ they themselves were fully persuaded. That persuasion however, was not derived from tradition, nor from dreams and visions of the night. It was not the result of philosophical argument, nor of mathematical demonstration. All these were foreign to the subject, and could not have proved the fact either true or false. Neither did their persuasion arise from the mere prophecies, in which the event was foretold. It was derived from such evidence as the nature of the thing more particularly required. They were *eye witnesses* of the fact.

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fact. They could say to the world, *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and which our hands have handled, declare we unto you.* I will not say that they actually saw him come out of the sepulchre. But upon going, early on the third day after his death, to the place of interment, they found there the grave clothes, in which the body of Jesus had been wrapped, but they found him not. Afterwards, they saw him alive, they conversed with him, and eat and drank with him: and they were too well acquainted with his person to be under any mistake. Indeed the event was so extraordinary, that some of them could not at the first, believe the testimony of their own senses. Thomas, when he heard from his brethren that Christ was risen, and that they had seen him, was so backward to believe it, that he said, *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* Yet he, and all the disciples soon

* Jhn xx. 25.

obtained the fullest satisfaction. It was S E R M.
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not on one transient interview with Christ, that they founded their belief of his resurrection. *He shewed himself alive to them after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of *God.*

IF indeed, Jesus Christ had shewn himself, after his resurrection, to only one, or two, or half a dozen persons, we might have suspected, that they were under a strong delusion. But, when a large multitude of people, in which are men of different ranks, different dispositions, and different abilities, unite in bearing testimony to the fact, we are borne down with the weight of evidence, and are constrained to admit their testimony as true. Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and seeing her prostrate at his feet, said to her, *Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and*

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your Father, and to my God and your
*God. Next he appeared to the women, who, together with Mary Magdalene, were on their way to carry the tidings of his resurrection to the †disciples. On the same day, he appeared, in another form, unto two of the disciples, as they were walking from Jerusalem to ‡Einmaus. Then he appeared to Simon Peter: and, the same evening, to the eleven §apostles. *After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. After that he was seen of James; then of all the ||apostles.* To these last he showed himself repeatedly; sometimes to a part of them, and sometimes to the whole of them together. Now, if amongst these persons, there were some, who might be easily deceived, it could not be the case with all. Never did the world furnish an instance of such a multitude's being deceived, in a matter, the evidence of which lay open to their senses. Never could history render it probable, that such

* John xx. 17. † Matt. xxviii. 9. ‡ Luke xxiv. 13, &c.

§ Luke xxiv. 35, &c. || 1 Cor. xv. 6, 7.

a multitude would, at the expence of every temporal enjoyment, deliberately unite in propagating as true, what they knew to be false. These witnesses consisted of learned and illiterate, rich and poor, credulous and incredulous, and yet, however different their descriptions, and their situations, they all, upon every occasion, agreed perfectly in their evidence concerning the Saviour's resurrection.

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BUT, if it be possible, let us, for a moment, imagine, that the disciples of Christ did really intend to impose upon the credulity of mankind. In that case, how foolhardy, and how destitute of common sense, must they have been, to broach their falsehood in Jerusalem, in the very place, which was the most likely to expose the cheat! Had they been deceivers, would they have commenced their operations here? Surely, no. They would have gone to some remote part of the world, where they might easily have escaped detection. But they chose the spot where the event happened, the city, in which dwelt

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dwelt the murderers of the Son of God, as the very first place, in which to spread their report. They declared in the ears of even those who put Christ to death, that he was risen again. If their report had been untrue, it was impossible that it should not be detected and exposed. Men of all ranks were the avowed enemies of Jesus Christ, and would have even strained a point to prove that the report of his resurrection was false. The chief priests and pharisees sealed the stone, which covered the mouth of the sepulchre, and placed a guard there, to prevent the removal of the body. The soldiers indeed, who guarded the tomb, contradicted the report; but that contradiction carried with it the most glaring inconsistency. *His disciples, said they, came by night, and stole him away while we *slept.* If they were really asleep, how should they know that his disciples stole him away? And, it is unreasonable to imagine, that, if they were awake, they would suffer the

body

body to be removed. But, supposing they had suffered it to be taken away, why were not the persons concerned in the theft apprehended and punished? This would have been no difficult task; and yet it was never done. In fact, the report of his resurrection proved too strong for opposition, and, even in Jerusalem, it gained ground every day.

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UPON the supposition that the disciples of Christ were impostors, they would, no doubt, have acted with greater policy and caution. As they would have chosen some other part of the world for their scene of action, so, for similar reasons, they would have waited, till the passions of men had, in a measure, subsided. In that case, the weaker part of mankind would have been better prepared to give credit to any delusive tale: and others would probably have been more careless in their opposition. But while the Redeemer's crucifixion was yet fresh in every one's memory, and at a time, when his enemies had scarcely recovered from the

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first transports of infernal joy, on account of their supposed victory, his disciples publicly and boldly asserted that he was raised up from death.

MANY other circumstances, tending to corroborate the evidence brought by the disciples, might now be taken into consideration: but enough has been said to convince any impartial person, that it is worthy of credit. I proceed therefore to take notice of a higher kind of evidence. *We are witnesses*, said the apostles, and not we only, but *also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him. The disciples of Christ went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* Hence it is said, *With great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord * Jesus.* The Holy Ghost, in order to confirm their word, enabled them to perform many miraculous things in the sight of the people. They spoke and preached in a variety of languages, in

* Acts iv. 33.

which

which they had never been previously instructed. In the name of Jesus, they healed all manner of sicknesses, restored sight to the blind, raised the dead, and exercised power over unclean spirits. And the same powers which they possessed, they imparted to other persons. By these things, many were confounded, and many were convinced of the truth of the apostolical doctrine, and brought to place the fullest confidence in Christ, as a living and almighty Saviour. Now, the Holy Spirit would never have granted such powers as these to a company of deceivers. He never would have stained his honour by giving sanction to a lie. Of the performance of these miracles we have the most respectable and authentic testimony : and no evidence to the contrary hath ever appeared. The libertines of later ages have indeed raised some sophistical objections against them : but their objections have again and again been proved to be frivolous. These miracles were actually wrought ; and the evidence arising from them, in favour of

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VII. the resurrection of Christ, is powerful and convincing.

BUT I will mention another kind of testimony, which the Holy Ghost hath borne to the truth of the fact, which I am now attempting to establish. That very gospel of which the resurrection of Christ is an essential article, hath been made effectual for the salvation of thousands and millions of sinners of every description. This kind of evidence shines strongly upon the present, as well as upon past ages. It is well known, that the whole system of the gospel stands in direct opposition to the general prejudices of mankind. It's doctrines are a stumbling block to their pride, and it's precepts are disgusting to their taste. Multitudes profess to believe it, upon the historical evidence which they have of it's truth; but they refuse to submit their tempers and their conduct to it's influence. The pleasures of sin are captivating, and towards them our inclinations naturally tend. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, many feel an attractive power

power in the gospel, which they are not able effectually to withstand. Their eyes are opened to see it's beauty and excellence; their hearts are opened to it's most penetrating influence; and their lives are framed in obedience to it's commands. We have seen the pride of genius, and wit, and learning, offered in sacrifice at the foot of the cross. The hypocrite has been constrained to throw off his disguise, and to seek that robe of righteousness, in which alone he can appear before God. The man, whose flinty soul would not suffer him to shed a generous tear over human misery, has, by the power of the gospel, been melted into sympathy and affection. The abandoned and profligate have been induced to renounce their guilty pursuits, and to become just, and temperate, and holy. These facts were not peculiar to the apostolical days; they, even now, frequently occur to our notice. It is impossible that they should be the production of any human power. The labours of christian ministers are, in

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the hand of God, often instrumental in doing good ; but, of themselves, they can never convert one sinner from the error of his way. The work is evidently that of an almighty hand. The salutary influences of the gospel are, in the scripture, every where ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit. That he is the author of them, every true christian knows experimentally. But, as the whole of the gospel, if Christ were not raised from the dead, must be an imposture, I will leave it to every impartial man, to judge whether it be probable, that, in that case, it would have received from heaven such a noble sanction. I will leave it you all, to judge whether the evidence of the Saviour's resurrection, though it hath been exposed to the scrutiny of ages, does not stand unshaken.

JESUS CHRIST hath nobly triumphed over death and the grave. Let the poor, the needy, the trembling, rejoice. When Satan would tempt you to call in question this wonderful event, and when your belief

Vief of it is ridiculed by men of corrupt minds, rejoice that you have such incontestible evidence of it's truth. When you are bowed down under a sense of your meanness, and unworthiness, and guilt, and when you are ready to fear the worst, remember that Jesus Christ hath given the most convincing proof, that he is able to save to the uttermost. Is there any thing too hard for him who hath conquered death? O let the remembrance of his resurrection encourage you to confide in him for pardon and salvation: let it kindle in your bosoms the most lively pleasure. And when reflecting on that solemn moment, which shall usher you into the world of spirits, banish every gloomy apprehension, recollect that Jesus lives, and that he is able to conduct you safely thro' the vale of death. Confide in him as your Saviour, and you shall not die eternally. *Because I live, saith he, ye shall live *also.*

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BEFORE I quite close my subject, I would address myself more particularly to

* John xiv. 19,

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you, who are about to approach the table of your Lord. You are now going to commemorate the highest and most astonishing display of divine benevolence to sinful men. It is to be hoped, that you have already indulged those reflections, which are suitable to the occasion: yet permit me to say, that your views of the cross of Christ receive their brightest tint from his resurrection. This, if you are truly serious, will animate your devotions, and inflame your hearts with heavenly affections and desires. The Redeemer hath spread a table with the kind memorials of his dying love: and he invites the poor, the helpless, the perishing, to be his guests. I imagine that I hear him say, Behold, ye sinners, the pangs, which I bore for your redemption. See my body mangled and bruised for your iniquities, and my blood poured out to wash away your guilt. I died, not for angels, but for men: for you, who were my enemies. I beheld you standing on the precipice of destruction: I pitied your hopeless condition; and died, that

~~What~~ you might live. *Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Do this in remembrance of me.* O what melting language is this! Let us, my brethren, obey the heavenly voice, And while we remember, that he groaned out his life for us wretched sinners, let us also recollect that he now triumphs over death and hell. This triumph is truly glorious : it renders our redemption complete. God hath raised him up, *having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* He hath satisfied every demand of law and justice. Let us therefore with deep humility, celebrate the stupendous love of the once crucified, but now risen, Saviour. Happy, thrice happy are they, who so eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man, as hereafter to sit down at the marriage feast of the Lamb in the kingdom of glory.

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S E R M O N VIII.

On the IMPORTANCE of the RESURREC- TION of CHRIST.

(Easter Day.)

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 14.

*If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching
vain, and your faith is also vain.*

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U R contemplations have recently taken a turn amongst the horrors of cruelty, and sufferings, and death. We have taken a solemn view of the closing scenes of the life of Christ. We have seen him betrayed, persecuted, and condemned, We have meditated on the bitterness of his sufferings, and have witnessed the pains and throes of universal nature, while she beheld

Beheld the agonies of her dying Lord. At his death a fullen gloom overspread the countenances and the hearts of his disciples. Notwithstanding all the respect which they bore to his memory, they were fearful, that their expectations had been too sanguine, and that they were now about to reap the bitter fruit of disappointment. *We trusted, said they, that it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel.* But, as yet, they knew not the full meaning of the scriptures, which spoke concerning him. SERM.
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ON the third day, these clouds of darkness began to disperse. Some women went to the sepulchre, in which their beloved friend was buried, carrying with them sweet spices and ointments, that they might anoint or embalm his body: but they found him not. At the first approach of day, the grave, being in travail, felt an unusual pang, and was delivered of her first born son. The Almighty Saviour, having finished the work, which was given him to do, and having made full satisfaction

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tion for the sins of his people, refused to be any longer subject to the power of mortality. He shook off his chains, burst open the prison doors, and returned again to life. This event was equally new and surprizing. So extraordinary did it appear to the disciples, that at first they hesitated to believe it. But they soon saw clearly, that he, who had so lately been a bleeding victim at the feet of death, had actually revived, had completely disarmed the monster of his sting, and had taken away the boasted victory of the grave.

THE resurrection of Christ from the dead was a fact, which required every kind and every degree of evidence, that the nature of the case could possibly admit. And, in mercy to the church of God, notwithstanding all the attempts of infidelity to render it doubtful, it stands confirmed by every testimony, which even an infidel can reasonably demand. Some of the proofs of this event are mentioned by St. Paul, in the verses which precede my text. Christ shewed himself to his disciples repeatedly,

peatedly, after his resurrection. At one SERM.
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time, *he was seen of above five hundred of the brethren together.* And last of all, saith the apostle, *he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time.* The fact itself being admitted, St. Paul applies it to the purpose of confirming generally the truth of the gospel, and particularly some of the principal points of christian doctrine. In the text, he affirms, that, if Christ were not risen, the whole system of doctrine, which was so zealously propagated by the apostles, would be absurd and vain; and that, in that case, the belief of the gospel and a profession of religion could be productive of no advantage. My intention in this discourse, is, to show you the real importance of the resurrection of Christ. This I shall attempt to do, by proving that it hath, not only a general and essential connection with the truth of the holy scriptures; but also a more particular and immediate influence upon those doctrines, the knowledge of which is necessary to our salvation.

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IF it could once be proved, that Jesus Christ did not rise again from the dead, it would at the same time be proved that the oracles of God are a mere imposture: and the doctrines of Aristotle, and Plato, and other heathen philosophers, would be of equal authority with the bible. The Saviour's resurrection is, in its connection with the various parts of scripture, like the key stone of an arch. If you take it away, the whole must fall: while it remains, it supports and is supported by the rest. All the prophets under the mosaical æconomy, spoke, more or less, of the sufferings of the Messiah, and of the glory which should follow. All their predictions on these subjects strongly imply that the Messiah should be raised up from the grave; and they could not be fulfilled without it. Our Lord himself, before his last sufferings, did, on many different occasions, foretell, not only his death, but also his resurrection from the dead. Almost whenever he spoke of his death, he declared that, on the third day, he should rise again. From that very day,

day, the apostles and other disciples positively affirmed, that the event had really taken place. Now, if it could be proved, that it had not come to pass, the sacred writers, both prophets and apostles, would be found false witnesses ; and the gospel itself would have been destitute of its highest confirmation. Prophecy might have appeared wonderful ; but it would have remained unfulfilled. The miracles of Christ might have induced his cotemporaries to think, that he was *a teacher sent from God* ; and his death would have left to the world an example of the noblest constancy and patience ; but, if he had not risen from the dead, prophecy, and preaching, and miracles, and sufferings, would have composed a carcass void of life, a body without a soul. The resurrection of Christ infuses vigour into every part of divine revelation. The gospel in which this fact is a fundamental article, frequently triumphs over ignorance, and prejudice, and guilt, and is made *the power of God unto salvation*. But, if its leading principles

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were false, it certainly would receive no sanction from heaven. As the prevalence of the gospel proves the Saviour's resurrection to be true, so his resurrection throws light on the prophecies, and fulfils them, and lays such a foundation for human hope, as the powers of darkness shall never be able to destroy.

By rising from the dead, Jesus Christ hath declared to the world at large, his Supreme Dignity. In the second psalm, which speaks of the sufferings and the exaltation of Christ, it is said, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* This expression is, by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, applied to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He saith of Christ, that he is *made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* For unto which of the angels said God, at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* We are not to imagine that Christ became the Son of God when he

* Heb. i. 4, 5.

left the grave. In his divine nature he was the Son of God from eternity, and as partaker of both the divine and the human nature in one person, he was the Son of God from the first moment of his incarnation. The meaning of the scripture just cited is, that Christ was, by being raised up from death, manifested and proved to be the Son of the Most High. Agreeably to which, St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, saith of Christ, that he was *declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the *dead*. Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, claimed the most absolute and universal dominion over the church and the world, and actually told his disciples, that *all power was given to him in heaven and in †earth*; and his pretensions were not groundless. Had he continued in the grave, however we might have admired his excellence, we could not have certainly known that he had power over death and hell. But, in a

* Rom. i. iv. † Matt. xxviii. 18.

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risen Saviour, we behold the Lord of glory, who is *over all, blessed for evermore.*

THE truth of the resurrection of Christ is also inseparably connected with the belief of a future judgment. Natural reason itself furnishes us with many presumptive arguments, that there will come a day, in the which God will separate the precious from the vile, in the which he will doom the wicked to deserved misery, and put his people in possession of true felicity. But in the scriptures this truth is set in the clearest light. Jesus Christ declared in the presence of his persecutors, *Hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of *heaven.* He will then come, not as a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, but as the Judge of quick and dead. The apostle Paul saith, *God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the †dead.* And again he saith, *To*

* Matt. xxvi. 64. † Acts xvii. 31.

*this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord, both of the dead and of the living: We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to *God. There may be scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? and, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the hearts of the sons of men may be fully set in them to do evil: but the day of the Lord will come upon them unawares, as a thief in the night. However men may now be disposed to trifle with things of eternal moment, yet we all, young and old, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, male and female, bond and free, must appear before the tribunal of Christ. Those who refuse to be saved by him now, shall be judged by him then. Every disguise shall then be stripped off, and men shall*

* Rom. xiv. 9, &c.

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appear in their true and proper characters.

All who live and die without the knowledge and experience of religion, shall then, without any respect of persons, be loaded with chains of darkness, and destined to perdition. All who are not ashamed in this world to follow the despised Saviour, shall then be welcomed into his kingdom and glory. The full evidence of all this we have in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. A greater confirmation of what Christ hath taught concerning his judging the world cannot be given, till the event itself shall take place.

HERE let us pause a moment, and review the ground which we have already passed. The truth of the holy gospel, the supreme dignity of Jesus Christ, and the certainty of a future judgment, are facts of the greatest importance; and, by the resurrection of Christ, they are fully established. He therefore, who indulges any prejudice against that gospel, which reveals to him the only method of salvation,

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who, while he calls himself a christian, SERM.
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treats the Saviour with indignity, and who lives as if he despised the approaching day of trial, is really the enemy of God, and of his own soul. You must suffer me, my brethren, to tell you, that, if this be your condition, you are in the high road to misery, and God will *laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* If you refuse to touch the golden sceptre of mercy, which he now holds out, you will shortly feel the iron rod of vengeance. Destruction will break in upon you like a mighty flood, and will overwhelm you for ever. On the other hand, if you are true believers in Jesus, you will rejoice that the foundation of your faith is so firmly laid, you will contemplate and rejoice in the grandeur of your sovereign Lord and Redeemer; and you will desire above all things an interest in that righteousness, in which alone you can pass the solemn scrutiny, when he shall appear to judge the world. You will be so far from following the giddy multitude, that you

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will cheerfully sacrifice every vain imagination; and every sinful passion; you will forego the dearest earthly enjoyments, and will *count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord.* You will then likewise listen with humility to even the most painful truths; you will renounce every false hope of happiness; and will be glad to possess an interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, though it be at the expence of every darling passion, which the human heart contains.—But the subject of this discourse demands further investigation.

X To him, who is really and earnestly concerned about his eternal welfare, the resurrection of Christ is a fact of greater importance than it can be in the eyes of the world. It hath an immediate influence upon the scriptural doctrine concerning the method of a sinner's acceptance with God. The oracles of truth every where represent man as a fallen creature, as a being, who, by reason of the transgression of his first parents, comes into the world,

world, with the strongest propensity to evil, and who, in the general course of his conduct, wilfully rebels against the authority of God. This is an universal case : not one is exempted. We are all *by nature the children of wrath*. Our sins expose us to destruction and despair. But to him, who is awakened to a just sense of his condition, the gospel of Christ proposes a remedy. The language of the Redeemer is, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*. The gospel declares that Christ bore the punishment, which was due to sin, that he suffered in the stead of guilty sinners, and that by his blood alone their guilt is done away. It informs us, that, as the sins of men were actually imputed to Christ, so his righteousness is, in like manner, imputed to all who truly believe on his name. The Son of God undertook to pay the dreadful debt, which we had incurred, and he hath paid it to the uttermost ; and hath obtained our full re-

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* Matt. xi. 28.

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lease. We are assured, that, *whofoever believeth in him shall not perish ; but have everlasting *life.* He who feels his malady will be glad to hear of this sovereign remedy, and will rejoice in it's application to his soul. But how could he, if Christ were not risen from the dead, assure himself, that the method of salvation which the gospel reveals, is either true or safe? When just about to lay hold on the precious hope of eternal life, his heart would misgive him, and his courage would die away. He would say within himself, What evidence have I, that God hath accepted the sufferings of Christ, as an atonement for my sins? If justice were satisfied, would the prisoner still be detained? Indeed, if Christ had continued under the power of death, such hesitation and perplexity would not have been without reason. St. Paul expressly declares, that *if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your †sins.* While justice remained unsatisfied, vengeance had it's

* John iii. 16. † 1 Cor. xv. 17.

course: but when the man of sorrows had fully paid the awful price of human redemption, God gave him a full discharge. This was a clear evidence that the work of redemption was compleated. Hence it is said, *Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our *justification.* So fully was God satisfied with the mediation of his Son, that he not only raised him up from the grave, but also exalted him with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of †sins. Those who are sensible of their misery and their need of Christ as a Saviour, have now no cause for hesitation or doubt in applying to him for mercy. To each of them it may be said, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, notwithstanding thine unworthiness, thy conflicts, and thy fears, verily thou shalt be saved.* He hath conquered death, and is able to make thee a sharer in his triumph.

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* Rom. iv. 25.

† Acts v. 31.

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BUT the importance of the resurrection of Christ extends yet further : it yields a powerful motive to a life of holiness and conformity to God. This view of it is taken by the apostle Paul, in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. *We are buried with him, that is, with Christ, by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* The resurrection of Christ is at once the pattern and the argument of our resurrection from the spiritual death of sin to a life of holiness and righteousness. When he left the grave, he shook off the principles and habits of mortality, and entered upon a state of existence that was new, and heavenly, and divine. So when sinners are converted to God, they are brought out of darkness into his marvellous light, they are freed from the dominion of sin and death, and are made *new creatures in Christ Jesus*. Their ideas, their dispositions, their conduct, their hopes, their pleasures, all become essentially

tially different from what they were before. They become *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* As the Saviour's resurrection represents to us that change, which the sinner experiences when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, so also it lays the christian under a perpetual obligation to walk before God in newness of life. If we heartily and sincerely depend upon the obedience and sufferings of Christ for pardon and acceptance with God, we shall feel *the power of his resurrection.* Our affections will be weaned from temporal things, and fixed upon those which are eternal. We shall, by faith, look into that world, to which Jesus Christ is gone to prepare mansions of glory for his people: and our expectation of appearing with him in glory will constrain us to *put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him.* Where there is a real dependance on Christ as a living and almighty Saviour, it will evidence

SERM. dence itself by a conscientious regard to
VIII. his commands, and will dispose men to
 imitate his purity and perfection.

DOES not this motive to holiness press upon us with all it's force? Do you not, even now, my christian brethren, glow with desire to be made conformable to your divine Master? While you see him triumphing over sin, and death, and hell, for your sake, is there a sin that you would wish to harbour in your breasts? Is there a wish, or a thought, that you would not consecrate to his service? Is there an earthly comfort that you would not sacrifice for his name sake? Is there a cross in religion that you would not chearfully endure? I know your sentiments and feelings. You desire that all your powers and talents should be employed for him alone. You wish to concur with him in his designs. Hence, through the assistance of his grace, you continually endeavour to stem the torrent of sin, and to keep a steady course towards absolute perfection. Let then the Redeemer's victory over death
 animate

animate your hearts. Whatever difficulties may meet you, you shall overcome them. Jesus Christ is the Captain of your salvation. He will never fail, nor forsake you.

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I AM now led to observe, in the last place, that the resurrection of Christ is mentioned in the scriptures, as an evidence and earnest of the resurrection of the bodies of good men, at a future period, to blessedness and immortality. Our souls and bodies are, in the present world, intimate companions. The separation of parties so much endeared, and so closely connected, must naturally be attended with pangs. But, if we be fully assured that this separation is only for a season, that, when the trumpet of the archangel shall shake heaven and earth, they shall meet again, that they shall meet without dullness, or discord, or any imperfection whatsoever, and that they shall dwell together in glory, never to part any more,—if, in our dying moments, we be fully assured of this, it will drive away the
gloom

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gloom of death, and will gild the dreary passage with serenity and peace. This assurance the disciples of Christ derive from his resurrection. It is written, *If we be planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. If Christ be not raised, then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. But, if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Thus it appears, that even the body, the meanest part of our frame, is under the protection of Christ, and that, though it must lie down in the grave, yet, by and by, it shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body. In this world our souls and bodies, though intimately connected, have their moments of variance and discord. Sometimes the operations of the mind render the body weak and languid, and often the dull flesh clips the wings of devotion, and fetters the soul. But these disagreements shall cease at death; and flesh and spirit shall

* Rom. vi. 5. † 1 Cor. xv. 18. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

one day unite in the most exalted harmony. Our bodies, no more subject to weariness or decay, shall then, together with our souls, have their employment and their portion in the glorious presence of God.

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You, who are presently to surround the altar of the Lord, are going to receive the kind tokens of your Redeemer's love. It was not expedient, that, after his resurrection, he should tarry long upon earth; but of our welfare he is never forgetful. In the institution of the sacred supper, he virtually said to all his disciples. *I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God. It is expedient for you that I go away: but I leave with you the memorials of my regard. Let this bread and this wine call to your remembrance what I endured for your sake. Let them convince you that though absent from you in the body, I am attentive to your concerns. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,*

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again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye also may be. I am he who liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.—O let the memorials of your Saviour's love animate your courage, and raise your affections to that state of glory, in which your love and your joys shall be complete. Death will be to you the gate of heaven. The resurrection of Christ is an argument that you shall rise to life and happiness. In the prospect of that period, let our bosoms pant for immortality, for glory, and for God. With such a prospect before us, let us not fear, but rejoice.—Yes, blessed Lord! we do rejoice in the assurance that though we die, we shall live again, live in thy glorious presence, and in the uninterrupted enjoyment of thy smiles.

S E R M O N IX.

On the ASCENSION of CHRIST.

(Ascension Day.)

MARK xvi. 19.

So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

AMONG the various articles of christian doctrine, the Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven appears, to a discerning eye, as one of the most animating and most important. It begets and nourishes in us the most exalted ideas of the work of redemption, and of the approbation which that work received from the Most High. On the cross, the Son of man is seen making
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ing reconciliation for iniquity ; at his resurrection, he is seen conquering and spoiling our enemies ; in his ascension, he is beheld taking possession of that glory, in which he and all his faithful servants are to dwell together for ever. This event did not indeed take place immediately on his return from the grave ; it was delayed for the space of forty days : but the delay was intended to answer some very salutary purposes.

THE disciples were not less surprized at our Lord's rising from the dead, than they had been at his crucifixion. The event was so new and extraordinary, that they could not at first credit the testimony of their own senses. Now, as they were appointed to be the witnesses of his resurrection, it was absolutely necessary, that they themselves should have the fullest and clearest evidence of the fact. If they had seen Christ come out of the grave, and ascend immediately to heaven, however convincing it might have been to them, yet their testimony to others would not have been
so


so strong. But he showed himself to them repeatedly, and eat, and drank, and conversed with them. So that they could not be under any mistake with regard to his person, or with respect to the truth of his resurrection. Hence the evidence, which they give, becomes clear and forcible.

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BESIDES, they were to be employed in propagating the gospel of Christ, and in extending his dominion throughout the earth. They were to resist and overpower the prevailing spirit and maxims of the world, to destroy the empire of sin, and to reduce the nations under the authority of Christ. They were to lay the foundations of a church, against which the gates of hell should never prevail, and which should flourish eternally. For such an undertaking, it was necessary that they should be charged with an authoritative commission, and that they should be furnished with particular instructions relative to their conduct. These they could not receive at any time so properly as after the work of redemption was compleated.

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 Their minds had, for some time before the death of Christ, been in a gradual state of preparation : but after he rose again, they received more ample directions for the formation of his church. *He was seen of them forty days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of *God.*

As they were to act in opposition to the powers of darkness, it was easy to foresee that innumerable difficulties would occur. The world would use it's utmost endeavours to deceive and ensnare them by it's smiles, or to terrify them by it's frowns ; false brethren would rise up, to bring their cause into contempt ; and Satan would take the alarm, and stir up his emissaries to vilify them, and to drag them to prison, and to death. With such a prospect before them, they stood in need of peculiar encouragement. We may reasonably suppose, that Jesus Christ, before his ascension, gave them many a kind assurance of protection and support. When he gave them their apostolical commission, he said,

* Acts i. 3.

Lo,

Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the SERM.
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end of the world. The recollection of this would, no doubt, animate their courage and their zeal, and would enable them to rise superior to every obstacle which they might meet. It would make them glory in tribulations, and triumph in the confidence that their conflicts should be crowned with endless victory.

THESE and other gracious purposes being answered, the solemn moment of separation drew near. Jesus led his disciples out from Jerusalem to that part of Mount Olivet, which was adjoining to Bethany; and there gaye them his farewell charge and benediction. While he blesses them, angels hover round the place, with the trumpets of God in their hands. As the winds and the sea had formerly obeyed him, so now the bright clouds of heaven wait on him, in readiness to perform his will. Upon one of these he seats himself, as on a triumphal car. Captivity chained to his chariot wheels, he drags along in triumph. Those saints who *came out of*
O 3 *their*

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probably attend him as the first fruits of his victories. While the disciples, filled with the most solemn delight, are attentively gazing upon this awfully majestic scene, he ascends *with a shout, and with the sound of a trumpet.* As far as possible, their eyes follow him in his ascension; but soon he is *received up out of their sight.* The pearly gates of heaven are opened for his reception, the heavenly harpers pour forth on every side their sweetest melody, and the Redeemer takes his seat in glory.

THE ascension of Jesus Christ is a memorable and important epocha in the history of redemption. Here we see the Son of man, at the conclusion of all his toils and sorrows, entering into his rest. Now he appears in heaven, as the representative of his people; and, in our nature, sits down on the throne of God, to exercise the supreme government over heaven and earth.

WHEN

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 WHEN Christ made his appearance upon earth, it was, *as a root out of a dry ground.* In the opinion of the world, *he had no form nor comeliness.* He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But he did not come to court the smiles of the multitude. He came to perform a work so difficult, that it could be accomplished by none but an almighty hand; and to sustain a burden so weighty, that the universe was languishing and sinking under it, and, without effectual relief, must have sunk under it for ever. *He came into the world to save sinners.* In the execution of this task he met with difficulties and obstacles innumerable. Beside the vicissitudes of life, to which, in common with all, he was liable, he had some trials, which are known to no others, except his mystical body the church, and some, which were peculiar to himself. He was surrounded by the flatteries and the frowns of men, and by the temptations of Satan. He was exposed to the rage of earth and hell. In proportion as he laboured to

SER M. IX. save others, they attempted to plunge him into absolute and irretrievable ruin. And the Supreme Majesty of heaven poured out upon his head vials of burning wrath. Yet, *for the joy which was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame.* He sunk down into death ; but death with all it's horrors, could not discourage him. His prospects extended beyond the grave. *Thou wilt show me, said he, the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for *evermore.* And the issue proves, that his confidence was well founded. St. Paul informs us, that *this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of †God.* His warfare is over, and he now wears the crown of victory. The sackcloth and ashes of humiliation he hath for ever laid aside. Every tear is dried up from his furrowed cheeks. The fiery darts of Satan cannot reach the place of his abode. He is still indeed persecuted in his followers : for

* Psalm xvi. 11.

† Heb. x. 12.

whatsoever disrespect is shown to even the meanest of them, he considers as an indignity offered to himself. The wicked despise his authority, and would fain literally *crucify him afresh*. But, though he bear long, he will by and by arise to take vengeance. However, he is personally beyond the reach of their power. He no more tastes the gall of affliction. He hath exchanged the cup of bitterness for the ineffable delights of heaven. As, at the first, God rested from his work of creation, so Jesus Christ, having finished the work of redemption, hath now entered into his rest.

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BUT it is not for himself alone, that he is gone into heaven: he appears there as the representative of his people. Though he is not present with us in the flesh, yet he is the manager of our concerns. If his longer stay upon the earth could have yielded any solid advantage to his church, he would have delayed his departure. But, all things considered, it was best for us, that he should go into heaven. When

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his disciples grieved at the idea of his separation from them, he said, *It is expedient for you, that I go *away.* His leaving of his people is not a forsaking of them. He is not gone away from us, as one who is weary of his connection with us, or regardless of our welfare. He saw where he could most essentially promote our interest, and thither he is gone for that purpose. The apostle Paul, speaking of the heavenly state, saith, *Whither the forerunner is, for us, entered, even † Jesus.* The business of a forerunner is usually to carry tidings of importance, or to prepare for the arrival of those whom he represents. Upon an errand similar to these is Jesus Christ gone before us to the abodes of bliss. He hath carried thither the tidings of our redemption. With what eagerness, we may suppose the inhabitants of heaven to assemble round the throne! His person they behold with admiration. At the relation of his toils, and sufferings, and victories, every countenance is fixed

* John xvi. 7.

† Heb. vi. 20.

in deep attention. All heaven is filled with solemn delight. The work of redemption is truly glorious. In heaven it gives perpetual life and joy. In hell it occasions endless confusion and trembling. It is no where, except in this world, looked upon or treated with indifference. Strange infatuation! Man, who is the only being, for whose benefit the work of redemption was designed, is the only being, who considers it as unworthy of his notice. Those however, who trifle with it now, will hereafter, perhaps to their everlasting sorrow, be sensible of it's great importance.

As the forerunner of his people, Jesus Christ is gone to provide also for every one of his faithful servants a residence in the mansions of glory. In order to comfort the hearts of his disciples, he said to them, *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for *you.* Having fully performed the conditions on

* John xiv. 2.

which

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which our salvation was suspended, he, in our name, claims and takes possession of the promised reward. To his disposal are submitted all the glories of the heavenly state; and from his hand every christian will receive his due proportion of felicity and honour. If we be the servants of God, we have more than the mere reversion, or the promise of a heavenly inheritance: we have the inheritance itself virtually in our possession; for Jesus Christ hath taken possession of it for us. This inheritance is so valuable, that, if our title to it were not very clear, we should be liable to perpetual jealousy and suspicion concerning our right. But our title is as full and clear as possible. The price hath been paid, and possession is given. There can be no doubt now, to whom the right of inheritance belongs. It belongs to the children of God, to the brethren of Jesus Christ. If we believe in Christ, we shall *not perish, but have everlasting life.*

WE may further consider Jesus Christ in his ascension, as the great *High Priest of*
our

our *profession* entering into the holy place, to make intercession for his people. Under the Jewish œconomy, the high priest annually, on the great day of atonement, having first offered sacrifice both for his own sins, and for the sins of the people, entered into the holy of holies with blood, and fire and incense. The blood he was to sprinkle upon the mercy seat, and before it; and the incense he was to burn, that the smoke of it might fill the place. These things were *a figure for the time then present*. They were intended to represent the mediation and intercession of Christ. Jesus Christ offered himself in sacrifice, not indeed for his own sins, for he was without spot or blemish, but for the sins of his people. And shortly after, he entered into the divine presence. *Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. He is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence*

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IX.

λ

presence

SERM.
IX. *presence of God for *us. There he ever liveth, to make intercession for them, who come unto God by †him. The prayer which he offered up a little before his crucifixion, shows us the nature of that intercession for sinners, which he now makes in heaven. He prays that his mediation may become effectual for the everlasting happiness of every one who does now, or shall hereafter, believe on his name. He does not ask with that hesitation, which too frequently accompanies our prayers: he asks with authority. Father, saith he, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given ‡me. He pleads for his church like an able advocate. Hence it is written, If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the §righteous. He pleads a good cause, and before an impartial and merciful Judge, and does it successfully. Satan is a busy adversary: he is the ac-*

* Heb. ix. 12, 24. † Heb. vii. 25. ‡ John xxi. 24.
§ 1 John ii. 1.

culer and calumniator of the brethren. S E R M.
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The world rises up against us in judgment. }
And our own consciences often reproach us. Our best duties are blotted with imperfections; and we too often fall into sin. These are so many obstacles to our salvation. But against them all Jesus Christ pleads the infinite merit of his atonement. This plea is irresistible. The blood is sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, and before it, to remain there as a token that the law and the justice of God are satisfied. Christ's intercession rises like fragrant incense before the throne of God, and, by the blood of sprinkling, is rendered truly efficacious. It is this, which gives our poor prayers all their value, and makes them acceptable to our heavenly Father. It is this, which sanctifies our obedience, and makes it like a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. The intercession of Christ is to his friends a fountain of living water, and to his enemies an overwhelming torrent of destruction.

JESUS

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JESUS CHRIST, at his ascension, took possession also of the supreme government of heaven and earth. It is true that, as God, he is, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Creator and Governor of the universe. He created all things for his own glory, and governs them according to his righteous will. To this absolute dominion he hath an unquestionable right ; for all created beings are every moment dependant on him for whatsoever they enjoy. But the exercise of this right does not forbid the acquisition of another. The government of which I now speak, is a mediatorial government, a government which he exercises in the human nature, and his right to which is founded in his humiliation. *He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should*

*should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the *Father.* The supreme authority which is committed to Christ, he will continue to exercise, till the final consummation of all things shall take place. Then shall the Son of man *deliver up the kingdom to God, even the †Father.* Then the whole œconomy of grace will have attained it's utmost maturity and perfection; and *God will be all in all.*

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BUT, to return. Our Lord, as the Supreme Governor of heaven and earth, has all the holy angels at his command. Whatever may be their rank, their order, their numbers, they are all the administrators of his authority. By him they are sent forth as ministering spirits, *to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation.* Sometimes they are commissioned to deliver the saints of God from their distresses. We are informed, that when the high priest and his associates had imprisoned the apostles for preaching the gospel, *the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and*

* Philip. ii. 8, &c. † 1 Cor. xv. 24.

SERM. IX. *brought them *forth.* And though we do not now see the angels with our bodily eyes, nor hear them speak with an audible voice, yet we have reason to think, that the deliverances which we from time to time experience, are frequently, if not always, brought about by their ministry. Sometimes they are employed to protect good men from imminent dangers. When the king of Syria sent a host of men to take the prophet Elisha, the servant of Elisha was exceedingly dismayed. But the prophet prayed for the young man, that the Lord would open his eyes. And the Lord did so : and the young man saw ; *and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about †Elisha.* These were the angels of God, by whose ministry the prophet was kept in safety. They are sometimes commissioned to smite and destroy the enemies of God's church. The hosts of Assyria encamped against Jerusalem : but the Lord said, *I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake,*

* Acts v, 19. † 2 Kings vi. 17.

*and for my servant David's sake. And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred, and fourscore, and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead *corpses.* In all the various dispensations of divine providence, angels are, in some way or other, concerned, and will be so, till the whole system of providence shall be compleated. In the end of the world, they will gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. And they will gather out of the kingdom of Christ all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and will cast them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of †teeth.

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IN the wise and wonderful œconomy of grace, the Holy Spirit himself, acts in subordination to the Son of man. Hence it is, that our Lord speaks concerning him with authority. He mentions him as the Comforter, whom he would send from the

* 2 Kings xix. 34, 35. † Mat. xiii. 41, 42,

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*Father. And again, he saith to his disciples, *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but, if I depart, I will send him unto †you.* We are not to suppose, that the Holy Ghost, is, in respect to his nature, inferior to Jesus Christ. He is truly a divine person, and is equal in every perfection to both the Father and the Son. But I now speak of the part, which he takes officially in administering the covenant of grace. His business is principally, though not entirely, with the servants of Christ. He impresses many a conviction upon the minds of the wicked ; so that they cannot always sin with that ease and pleasure which they affect. Sinners, for the most part, have many checks and stings of conscience, their resistance of which will one day cover them with confusion. But the Holy Spirit is chiefly employed in the regeneration of men, and in preparing them by his sanctifying influence, for the kingdom of heaven. He convinces of sin, and humbles the sinner

* John xv. 26. † John xvi. 7.

before God. He intercedes for us at the throne of grace, by disposing our minds to prayer, by kindling within us a holy fervency of desire, and by imparting to us an humble faith in the Lord Jesus. He leads us gradually into an experimental acquaintance with the system of divine *truth. He is the agent, by whom we are supported and strengthened under all the conflicts of life. He prevents us, or reclaims us from wandering away from God. He makes us conformable to the image of Christ. He gives us the victory over sin and death, and guides us in safety to heaven.—In administering the authority of Christ, the angels, and the Holy Spirit, the God of angels, heartily concur in the same design, that is, in promoting the glory of the Redeemer, and the salvation of his church. They are employed in using the means of forwarding our salvation and felicity, and he in giving to those means their efficacy and value. And their united operations kindle in the hearts of

• John xvi. 13.

S E R M.
 1 X. } good men a flame of gratitude, which,
 like the holy fire on the altar, burns night
 and day, a flame, which will never go
 out.

IT may be observed, that Jesus Christ, as the Sovereign of the universe, hath all the enemies of his church under his absolute controul. They cannot without his knowledge, frame any device for hurting or ruining the souls of men. They cannot accomplish any of their wicked purposes, but by his connivance or permission. He holds them all in chains. He can say, even to the most powerful of them, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.* He can defeat their intentions, and restrain their rage. He can turn the counsels of Ahitophel into foolishness, and thus make him instrumental in frustrating his own schemes. Satan may tempt, and that too, sometimes in a manner the most fearful and distressing: the world may persecute, or may spread it's snares, to make us fall; and sin may assault our hearts, and fill us with confusion; but these enemies are all
 under

under the power of Christ. They cannot come beyond the limits of his permission. S E R M.
IX. And those who depend on him for victory, he will never suffer to be overcome. He is faithful: from what quarter soever our temptations may arise, *he will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear* *it.

As King of saints, Jesus Christ keeps all his people in a state of continual dependance upon him, for every blessing which they enjoy now, or hope to enjoy hereafter. He is a fountain, from which streams of mercy are perpetually flowing into every department of his church. Do his servants stand in need of spiritual wisdom? He sends his Holy Spirit to *guide them into all †truth*. Do they want comfort in the vicissitudes and troubles of the christian life? The same Spirit he sends as a *comforter to abide with them for ‡ever*. In fact, all their wants he richly supplies;

* 1 Cor. x. 13. † John xvi. 13. ‡ John xiv. 16.

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and all their crosses he converts into real and substantial benefits. But those who honour him most, by the liveliness and vigour of their faith, he honours most, by the abundance of spiritual blessings which he grants them. If, in the pursuit of happiness, we wander from him, we entangle ourselves in innumerable difficulties: but if we simply and habitually confide in his promise, we obtain a large portion of true enjoyment. It is not by the carnal security, which, in their prosperity, men are so apt to indulge, nor by the carnal reasonings, which, in their adversity, they are so prone to follow, but by believing in Christ, that the christian thrives, and grows up to maturity. It is our Lord's gracious pleasure, that our eye should be steadily fixed on himself. While it is thus fixed, we are happy; but when once it begins to waver, we are surrounded and distressed by darkness and confusion.

THIS subject may serve to show us, why it is, that the christian cannot have that
relish

relish for the things of the world, which gives to other men so much apparent satisfaction. They who confine their attention to the present life, eagerly hunt after it's wealth, and court it's noisy honours, or delight themselves with intemperance, and revelling, and worldly mirth; and they wonder that any person should refuse to tread in their steps. Ye vain sensual men! let me tell you that the christian's best friends, and his highest expectations are in heaven, and that his principal enjoyments are such as flow from the throne of God. As a man, he feels indeed the necessity of a portion of the good things of this life: as a christian he hath learned to hunger and thirst for nobler blessings. He considers himself as a candidate for heaven; and in meditating on the glories of Christ, in religious conversation, or in reading a page of his bible, he finds pleasure more substantial and more worthy of regard, than that, which whole ages of wealth or intemperance can yield. His present enjoyments, however, are but a prelude to
greater;

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greater; for ere long, while the wicked sink down in endless misery, he shall reign with Christ in glory.—Yes, ye humble followers of Jesus, notwithstanding all your conflicts, and all your fears, you shall reign with Christ in glory. O take encouragement. *Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.* Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, will assuredly come again, and receive you to himself.

S E R M O N X.

On the EFFUSION of the HOLY SPIRIT.

(Whit-Sunday.)

ACTS ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

When the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

THE return of this season of the year
calls upon us to look back to the
infancy

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infancy of the christian church, and to contemplate the wisdom of God in the introduction of the gospel dispensation; and proper views of such a subject are happily calculated to afford the most lively pleasure to the lovers of real religion.

JESUS CHRIST, while he sojourned with his disciples upon earth, taught them to believe, that under his immediate influence and support, they were to be the founders of the new testament church: and, with a view to the forwarding of this design, he, just before his ascension, commanded them to tarry at Jerusalem, till they should receive the Holy Spirit, which he had promised to send down from heaven. It is probable, that they did not fully comprehend the instructions, which they received; yet, being well assured of some extraordinary communications from Christ, they, in obedience to his command continued together in the city, and employed themselves in the daily exercises of devotion.

W H E N

WHEN the day, in which the Jews offered to God the first fruits of their harvest, and commemorated the giving of the law on mount, *Sinai, and which is called, in my text, *the day of pentecost*, was fully come, the disciples were all with one accord in one place; perhaps, in the upper room that is mentioned in the preceding chapter. Among the Jews, the day is always supposed to begin in the evening; but it is not reckoned as fully come, till the shades of night are withdrawn. It was therefore early in the morning, that the disciples, closely united to one another in affection, and delighting in each other's company, were assembled, to present their united devotions to God, and to wait for the manifestations of his favour. *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.* This was a solemn introduction to the event, which was just about to take place; and it could not fail to ex-

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* Lev. xxiii. 15. and Ex. ch. xix.

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cite the closest attention. While they were earnestly desirous to know what this strange sound should mean, *there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.* These fiery cloven tongues were significant emblems of the Holy Spirit, with which the Saviour had promised, that his disciples should be baptized, and were perhaps intended, particularly to point out the variety and the efficacy of those gifts, with which the apostles were filled. Variety seems to have been represented by their being cloven, and efficacy by their having the appearance of fire.

By the term Holy Ghost, which is used in the text, is signified the extraordinary communications or gifts, which were imparted by the immediate operation of the Divine Spirit. These were poured out in great abundance, first upon the apostles, and afterwards, upon many other of the primitive christians. They were endued with the power of conversing and preaching freely in many different languages, without

without any human instruction. Hence, S E R M.
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as soon as the Holy Ghost descended upon them, *they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Besides this, they received ability to heal all manner of diseases, and to cast out devils, and to raise the dead to life, without the use of any ordinary means. They were also furnished with an uncommon share of wisdom, and discernment, and faithfulness, and zeal, to qualify them for the due execution of the important offices, which they were to fill in the christian church.

SUCH an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit was not intended as a mere ostentatious display of the divine power. It was designed for real use, even to us, upon whom the latter ages of the world are come. In this discourse, I propose to consider it as a noble and convincing testimony in favour of the doctrine, which the apostles taught, and as a striking representation of the manner, in which the
Son

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Son of God hath determined to promote and maintain his interest in the world.

THE system of divine truth, hath, in all ages, been substantially the same: but the brightness or the obscurity, with which it has been attended, hath varied, according to the different œconomies, which have been established in the church of God. The latest and clearest discovery of it is contained in the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his apostles. The Redeemer gave a commission to the twelve to *go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every *creature*, that is, to every human being, who might be willing to hear. As men were to be the subjects of their ministry, so the doctrine, which they were to teach, was particularly suited to man as a fallen creature. Accordingly, when they opened their commission to the world, they taught that men were sinners, and that, by reason of sin, the whole posterity of Adam was brought into a state of condemnation and ruin. It appears from the sermons

* Mark xvi. 15.

and writings of the apostles, that they considered the souls of men, as enslaved by sensuality and sin, and as stained with guilt of the deepest dye, and consequently, as being exposed to everlasting misery and shame. St. Paul informs us, that *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to *condemnation.* This doctrine is a necessary preparative for the reception of the gospel of peace: for, till men are deeply convinced, that their condition as sinners is awful and dangerous, they cannot be truly desirous of that salvation, which the gospel reveals. And, though there are in every man's heart, and in almost every circumstance of life, sad proofs of human depravity, yet, till a divine light shows men their wretchedness, they are never humbled on account of sin.

WHEN the apostles went forth to preach the gospel of salvation, they unfolded and

* Rom. v. 12, 18.

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spread out to public view a system of doctrine, which is suitable to man in no other character than that of a sinner. The self-righteous Pharisee saw no beauty in the scriptural plan of redemption: but he who became sensible of his sinfulness, and desirous of obtaining mercy, leaped for joy when he heard the preachers declare that pardon was freely bestowed upon every true penitent. To them who groaned under the burden of sin, and trembled at the vengeance, to which they were exposed, the disciples of Christ every where proclaimed good news. They told a plain artless tale, and laid it as the foundation of all human hope. They declared, that Jesus of Nazareth was appointed of God, to be the Saviour and the Judge of the world: that, though he was *equal with God*, yet *he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of *men*: that he was made under the law, to redeem them who were under the †law: that he was delivered to death for our offences, and was

* Philipp. ii 7.

† Gal. iv. 4, 5.

raised

raised again for our *justification: that he is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto †him: and that, unto them who look for him, he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto ‡salvation. All the blessings of the gospel they freely offered to such as were willing to receive them. The vilest of men might believe and repent; and, if they possessed such repentance and faith as issue in sincere obedience to God, they would undoubtedly be saved. All true faith in Christ *worketh by love*, and is productive of holiness. Therefore the apostles unite in saying, *Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall receive remission of sins.*

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THESE important doctrines were typically represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the Jewish church. They were the objects, towards which the eye of prophecy was continually directed. They were, in some measure, known to even the patriarchal ages of the world.

* Rom. iv. 25.

† 1 Pet. iii. 22.

‡ Heb. ix. 28.

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But the obscurity, in which they had formerly been veiled, was totally removed by the ministry of the gospel. The apostles singled out the person of the adorable Saviour, and *set him forth evidently before our eyes*. They opened to public view the treasures of infinite mercy, and invited the poor and wretched to partake of them. And they solemnly declared, that such persons as should obstinately continue to reject their instructions, should be exposed to all the terrors of eternal wrath. The light, which, by their ministry, was thrown upon the method of salvation, gave it an air of novelty. The doctrine itself, which they preached, appeared to the superficial eye unreasonable and romantic, and was a stumbling block to men of all ranks. Mankind, though deeply interested in the truth of the gospel, were so far from being prepossessed in its favour, that, on the contrary, they were filled with such prejudices against it, as the strongest powers of reasoning could not remove. As the apostles exercised their ministry in such circumstances,

cumstances, and as they expressly and positively marked out the characters, which shall hereafter be admitted into heaven, and those which shall be doomed to hell, it became indispensably necessary, that they should be able, not only to adduce weighty and convincing arguments in defence of their doctrine, but also to show some visible demonstration, that it had the sanction of God. Besides, the Jewish people, whenever any extraordinary character had been raised up amongst them, had been accustomed to see some visible proof of his mission: it was therefore to be expected that they would require some such proof of the mission of the apostles; and the more especially, as these men assumed greater powers, than had been vested in any of the prophets since the time of Moses. The condition of the world in general, that of the Jewish nation in particular, and a variety of concurring events, required that the apostolical doctrine should have some extraordinary tokens of the Divine approbation and support.

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THE miraculous powers, with which, on the day of pentecost, the disciples were endued, were very proper evidences of the truth of the doctrine which they taught. It is true that false apostles have had their *signs and lying wonders*, to deceive the people; but these, when brought to examination, have invariably been found defective. Whereas, the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit filled the minds of sensible men with a pleasing surprize. They bore a striking analogy to the general scheme of the gospel. As this was a system of mercy, so they were chiefly of the benevolent kind. Under their influence, sight, and hearing, and health, and life, were scattered round about, and the diseased and miserable were made to sing for joy. From them, no one, except the impenitent sinner and the infernal spirit, had any thing to fear. If, in some particular cases, the apostles were enabled to inflict exemplary punishment upon offenders, it might serve to convince the world, that, if they should obstinately reject the salvation,

which

which the gospel revealed, they should hereafter be exposed to the vengeance of that Being, whose mercy they set at nought. To the mind that is not *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, these extraordinary gifts must appear to be, not only the most suitable, but also the most convincing proofs, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is worthy of universal acceptance.

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THE gifts of the Holy Ghost, like the doctrine which they were employed to defend, gloried in an open exposure. They disdained to hide themselves in holes and corners. They challenged the severest examination of men, and they nobly stood the test. When deceivers have boldly ventured upon the propagation of superstitious errors, and have boasted of the possession of miraculous powers, they have always taken care to display their abilities, in the presence of such persons only as were interested in their success. But the true gifts of the Holy Spirit were alike visible to all. When they were exercised,

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streets, and highways, and places of public resort, were mostly the scenes of action, and men of every description, as well foes as friends, were the spectators.

SHOULD any one enquire, why these extraordinary powers were not continued in the christian church, I will take upon me to answer, that their continuance was not needful. It has been already observed, that, at the introduction of the new testament œconomy, many circumstances rendered it necessary, that there should be some visible and remarkable tokens of it's having the divine sanction : but the same necessity does not exist now. The gospel was never intended to be subject of vain curiosity : it was designed to be the object of faith. God hath given such evidence of it's truth, as ought to satisfy every body, such as will leave the careless and unbelieving without excuse. The exercise of those miraculous powers, by which the apostolical doctrine was confirmed, is a question of fact, a question, which hath long since been decided by the most credible

dible testimony, by such testimony as, in SERM.
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any other case, never fails to silence every objection. We can have no reasonable doubt, that such powers were bestowed upon the primitive disciples of Christ. And, instead of being displeased, that those extraordinary communications were only temporary, we ought rather to adore and applaud the wisdom that withdrew them, when they became no longer necessary.

SEEING that the gospel of Christ hath received such high confirmation, let us beware of treating it with indifference. When men suffer themselves to trifle with that truth, in the support of which heaven itself is engaged, they show a fatal disregard to their own salvation. Shall we then live, as if we did not believe the gospel to be of any real importance? Shall we treat it with the same levity, as if it were an idle tale? Shall we turn a deaf ear to the voice, which calls us to felicity and glory? Let us banish such an unworthy disposition from our hearts. Let us make the sacred volumes the object of our daily

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daily concern. Remember, that these writings are big with happiness, or with misery, to us all. It is both our indispensable duty and our invaluable privilege, to converse much with the bible, that we may become *wise unto salvation*. The scripture lies open before us; and those parts of christianity, the knowledge of which is essential to human happiness, are written in the plainest and most intelligible manner. Ignorance in any man, is wilful, and criminal, and dangerous. If you be truly sensible of the worth of your souls, you will rejoice in having the gospel as your guide to heaven, you will bless the Father of mercies, that he hath borne witness to it's truth, by the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, and will continually endeavour to improve in the knowledge of God, and in holy conformity to his will.

BUT the event, which we now commemorate, may be considered further, as a striking representation of the manner, in which Jesus Christ hath determined to promote

mote and maintain his interest upon the earth. The great design of Christ in coming into the world, was, to erect a spiritual kingdom, which should spread itself over the nations. He would not interfere with civil government; but left it, under providence, to the discretion of others. The empire, which he founded, is of a nature purely spiritual. Hence, when he stood before Pilate, he said, *My kingdom is not of this *world.* The enemies which he designed to oppose, were sin and Satan; and the laws which he condescended to establish, were those of piety and happiness. The characteristic feature of his government was the restoring of sinners to the image and the enjoyment of God.

IN order to the establishment of such an empire, a divine influence was absolutely needful. Sin had taken possession of the human heart, and had rendered mankind naturally averse from those things, which are most worthy of pursuit. Instead of being ready to submit to the

* John xviii. 36.

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mild and peaceful government of Jesus Christ, all men in an unregenerate state, virtually say concerning him, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* In order to the salvation of sinners, their prejudices must be subdued, and every power of their souls must be brought into subjection to God. In fact, they must become new creatures in Christ Jesus. But what except a divine power can effect this? All the force of reasoning and argumentation has, by long experience, been proved to be ineffectual. In vain does the cool philosopher declaim on the beauty of moral virtue; in vain does he urge it's connection with the interests of mankind. Men may hear his doctrine, and seemingly approve, but it will have no influence upon their temper or conduct. Though the powers of reasoning and eloquence should be assisted by every motive to piety, which the gospel furnishes; yet the effect will be the same. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but it is *God, who giveth the* *in-

* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

crease. While passion and prejudice reign in the heart, they render it utterly incapable of conviction.—Neither can any human laws, even the wisest, answer the end of the spiritual government of Jesus Christ. The laws of men may indeed provide for our education in the principles of religion; they may furnish us with the gospel ministry, and enforce our attendance on it; but they can never make us truly religious. The heart is the seat of all godly dispositions, and this is beyond the reach of human statutes. They may be serviceable in restraining men from those excesses, which are more immediately hurtful to society; but they cannot of themselves, produce true love to God, or benevolence to man.—Nor can even the power of the natural conscience establish the dominion of Christ in the soul. The conscience will indeed, unless men be past feeling, convince them, in some degree, of their sinfulness, and perhaps, fill the mind sometimes with terror: but it can never discover to a sinner the hope of the gospel; it
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can never reveal the pardoning love of Christ to the guilty; nor enable them to apply to him for salvation. Conscience, though it operate powerfully, and that too, in the light of the gospel, can never prevail on the *wicked to forsake his way*, nor make one sinner heartily willing to be saved. This is a work so difficult, that by none but an almighty arm can it be accomplished.

THE gospel began it's course under a divine influence, not by way of experiment, but as a token and emblem of the manner, in which it was to make it's future progress. The apostles received the gift of tongues, because, as by the confusion of languages men had been scattered abroad in the earth, so, by the gift of them it was shown, that the nations were to be reunited into one body. The restoration of sight to the blind was a plain intimation of the efficacy of the gospel in bringing sinners into the marvellous light of divine truth. The healing of diseases showed the triumphs of divine grace over the sinfulness

ness of the human heart. Every miracle wrought by the disciples, was, not only effected by a divine influence, but also an indication of some spiritual blessing communicated by the power of Christ. The christian church was not to depend for it's support and increase upon the wit or will of man. If kings would become it's *nursing fathers*, well; but if not, it could stand alone: it could even grow in the face of persecution, and under the greatest loads of oppression. Without divine support, whatever forms of godliness may be retained in the world, real religion must soon fall to the ground. The christian ministry, whatever countenance it may receive from men, owes all it's success in promoting the salvation of sinners to the power of God. The Holy Ghost works now, not by the communication of miraculous powers, but by a certain, tho' invisible and mysterious influence, upon the souls of men. *As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh,*
and

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X. *and whither it goeth; so is every man, who is born of the *Spirit.* If we become willing to receive Christ as our Saviour, if we obtain any victory over the world, or sin, or Satan, if we be strengthened in the performance of duty, or in the suffering of affliction, or if we enjoy comfort and pleasure in the service of Christ, it is because we are partakers of the Holy Ghost. Without his influence, we can do nothing, we can bear nothing, we can enjoy nothing. *There are in the hearts of good men diversities of operations, but it is the same God, who worketh all in all.*

WE learn hence, that the only way to be successful in those pursuits, which relate to our eternal welfare, is to seek earnestly for the assistance of the Holy Spirit. His blessing does not render our diligence unnecessary; on the contrary, it increases and improves it. The man who has a guide, on whom he can safely depend, will travel even the most difficult road with spirit and alacrity. In the service of

* John iii. 8.

† 1 Cor. xii. 6.

Christ,

Christ, while we use our utmost exertions, SERM.
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we ought, in order that those exertions may be profitable and pleasant, to pray for, and to expect the gracious assistance of the Holy Ghost. Numbers who strive to enter into heaven will fall short, because they trust in their own powers, and look not for that help, which cometh from God. Let us then, *not be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the *promises.* At the same time let us remember, that *it is God, who worketh in us, to will, and to do, of his good †pleasure.* When we are led by the Spirit of God, we can pray with fervency, we can read the scriptures with understanding and delight, we can enjoy communion with him in his ordinances, we can perform with chearfulness the various duties of the christian life, and can rejoice in the assurance of entering into glory. Seek, therefore, my brethren, his continual help. In every doubtful matter ask his advice; and in every

* Heb. vi. 12. † Philip ii. 13.

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trial implore his protection. Be not backward in praying for the Spirit. Do not think it presumption. You have every encouragement to it. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask *him? Ask then, and ye shall receive.* And let this truth be always present to your view, that he who is guided, encouraged, and supported, in the path of duty, by the Spirit of God, cannot but be happy.

* Luke xi. 13.

S E R M O N XI.

On the ESTABLISHMENT of the CHRIS- TIAN MINISTRY.

(Whit-Sunday.)

EPHESIANS iv. 11, 12, 13.

He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

SAINT James hath long since informed SERM.
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us, that every good gift, and every
perfect gift is from above. His intention

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was to remind us, not only that we ought to ascribe all our blessings to the goodness of God, but also that all the gifts, which God bestows upon his people, are, without exception, either in themselves, or in their consequences, or in both, really and perfectly good. And his ideas, being strictly conformable to the universal experience of good men, are highly proper and just.

A VAST variety of blessings hath been poured down from heaven upon the church of God : blessings, invaluable in themselves, and at the same time wonderfully suited to it's particular circumstances, and calculated to promote it's prosperity and salvation. In the infancy of the world, God was pleased to instruct his people by dreams and visions. He afterwards thought it proper to cherish their hopes by the institutions of Moses, and by the nervous representation of prophecy. And *when the fulness of the time was come*, he sent his Son into the world, to perform the glorious work of redemption, and to give us a
clear

clear view of life and immortality. Jesus Christ, when he had devoted himself to death for our transgressions, and had risen again for our justification, gloriously triumphed over our enemies, and introduced into the world a purer and brighter dispensation than had ever been known. Wherefore it is said, *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto *men.* These gifts, noble in their kind, and happy in their consequences, were, on the day of pentecost, solemnly bestowed upon the christian church. Christ appointed the various orders of christian ministers, and gave them abilities for the discharge of their duty. *He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the*

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* Eph. iv. 8.

S E R M. *fulnefs of Christ.* These words give me
 XI. occasion, to make some remarks upon the
 establishment of the christian ministry, and
 to consider it's design. May our medita-
 tions be crowned with the divine blessing! *

THE christian ministry, considered in
 that extensive view of it, which my text
 gives, includes both those ministers, whose
 office is common to every age of the
 church, and those, whose appointment
 was peculiar to the first dawning of the
 christian œconomy. The ordinary mi-
 nisters are styled pastors and teachers, and
 the extraordinary, apostles, prophets, and
 evangelists.

HE gave *some, apostles.* The apostles
 were the chief ministers of Christ. Their
 labours and their authority were extended
 throughout the habitable world. Their
 office, taken in it's full extent, was ex-
 traordinary; yet in it's nature it included
 all inferior offices whatsoever. Hence, if
 they sometimes assumed the distinguishing
 character of the apostles of Christ, at other
 times they styled themselves presbyters or
 elders,

elders, and even ministers or deacons. S E R M.
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And the history of their lives furnishes us with full proof, that upon different occasions, they performed the duties of inferior ministers. What was in their office extraordinary, hath long since become extinct: the other parts of it, which relate to the government of the church, and the administration of divine ordinances, continue to the present day.

OTHERS were endued with the spirit of prophecy. This talent was communicated to both men and women, and enabled them to explain to the people the mind of God, and especially to foretell future events. In this service were employed Agabus, and the daughters of Philip, and many others. The prophetic office was not peculiar to the christian church; for prophets had been frequently raised up amongst the Jews: neither was it designed to be perpetual. It seems to have had its rise in the necessity of the times; and together with that necessity, it was finally laid aside.

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SOME were invested with the peculiar character of evangelists. The evangelists were the companions and assistants of the apostles in their travels and labours. They were also frequently commissioned to settle the government of those churches, which had been planted by the ministry of the apostles. Of this character were Philip and Timothy; the former of whom was also a deacon, and the latter, bishop of the Ephesian church.

OTHERS were commissioned to act as pastors and teachers. It has been thought by some, that these different words are both used, to denote one office. Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that the character of a pastor includes that of a teacher: for pastors are shepherds, whose proper business it is, to *feed the flock of God* with the word of truth. But notwithstanding this, pastors and teachers are characters really distinct. The word pastors is applicable to those ministers, to whom is committed the care of souls, whether they be elders, who have the charge of a single congregation,

congregation, or bishops, who superintend a whole diocese. The word teachers is descriptive of those ministers, who are not in the pastoral office, such as have been sometimes called catechists, and sometimes deacons, to whom it belongs, if need be, to assist the pastor in the celebration of divine service, to administer baptism, and to instruct youth in the principles of religion.

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I AM aware, that it may be said, that the first teachers of christianity were called to the ministry, and employed in it, long before the time, to which my text evidently refers. It is true, the apostles and some others had been appointed to their respective offices before the death of our Saviour. But they appear to have been, till after the ascension of Christ into heaven, in a state of gradual preparation for the ministry. Previous to that event, their labours had been only occasional, and had been confined to the land of Judea : but, on the day of pentecost, they were, by the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost,
solemnly

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solemnly consecrated to be the ministers of God; and from that time, their commission to preach the gospel extended to every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, under heaven.

HOWEVER, in some points of view, the offices of which I have spoken may be essentially different from each other, and however different may be the abilities of the men who have been, or who may hereafter be called to execute them; yet they all harmoniously tend towards one point. The grand design of the whole is, the present improvement, and the future glory of the church of God. To the consideration of this article I now proceed.

THE various branches of the christian ministry were more immediately designed *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, or, as some read the passage, for the perfecting of the saints by the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

THE true ministers of Christ are devoted to a painful and important work. They

They are designed to be, not loiterers, but S E R M.
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labourers in the church of God. He whose highest idea of the ministry is, that it is a genteel profession, or who supposes, that the reading of public prayers, or the repetition of a thread-bare set of sermons, is all that is requisite in the execution of this office, is an entire stranger to it's real importance. Christian ministers are separated from all temporal occupations, that they may have leisure, not to bury themselves alive in luxury and dissipation, but to improve in knowledge and in piety, that they may be *workmen, who need not to be ashamed*. St. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, having mentioned the objects, which ought to engage a minister's attention, saith, *Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto *all*. And, in that excellent charge, which is given by the bishop, to such as are candidates for the order of priesthood in the church of England, a reference being made to the words

• 1 Tim. iv. 15.

of

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of my text, it is said, "Consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the spouse and body of Christ: and see that you never cease your labour, your care, and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." It is also worthy of notice here, that as the ministry, being called a *work*, forbids indolence, so being the work of the *ministry*, it forbids dominion over the conscience. Ministers are indeed to rule their people; but they must do this chiefly by the forcible doctrines of the bible, and by a holy life. Hence St. Peter exhorts those who sustain the sacred character, *not to be lords over God's heritage, but to be examples to the *flock.*

* 1 Pet. v. 3.

THE labours of christian ministers are directed to a glorious end: they are designed *for the perfecting of the saints.* Absolute perfection is a point, to which we cannot indeed, in the present life, attain; but towards which we may and ought gradually to advance. The human mind is so enfeebled by sin, that the most intelligent christian cannot at once comprehend all that is needful to his happiness. There is, even in the best, much room for improvement in knowledge, and in experience, and in real purity of life. Now the saints of God, at whose perfection the christian ministry aims, are deeply sensible of their own deficiencies; and accustoming themselves to *fit under the shadow* of the gospel, they find *it's fruit sweet to their taste.* By one sermon, they gain a new idea; by another they have a doubt removed; now, their faith and hope are strengthened; and now, their smarting sorrows are relieved; upon one occasion, their affections and their zeal

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are animated ; and upon another, they are inspired with stronger resolution in the service of God. Thus they exemplify the saying, that *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect *day*. I own, that it is not without difficulty, that good men are enabled to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God*. Though the young inexperienced christian, when he begins to taste the pleasures of religion, is apt to imagine, that his warfare is well nigh over, and that he has nothing to do, but to receive the summons, and to mount up to heaven ; yet longer experience teaches him, that it is through many a wintry storm, that he must make his way, step by step, to eternal bliss. But notwithstanding all the weakness and the fears of the servants of Christ, and notwithstanding all the snares, with which they are surrounded, and the trials, to which they are exposed, the ministry of God's word, thro' the divine blessing, nourishes their souls,

* Prov. iv. 18.

and

and will in due time make them ripe for glory. SERM.
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THE gospel ministry is intended also *for the edifying the body of Christ*: that is, for the building up of the christian church. The church, taken in it's noblest view, includes all of every age, and sex, and country, and distinction, who become partakers of eternal salvation. This grand association of true believers is the body of Christ. This the term *edifying* leads us, at present, to consider as a stately building. It is an edifice, which may indeed, in the eyes of unthinking men, appear worthless and contemptible; but which, in the eye of God, is truly magnificent. It is the palace, in which he chuses to reside. The apostle Paul's description of the church under this figure is beautiful. *Ye are built, saith he, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are builded together.*

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XI. } *gether, for an habitation of God through the *Spirit.* The foundations of the church were laid many ages ago. The building hath been, and is now, gradually going forward: and in due time shall *the head stone be brought forth with shoutings.* Men and angels shall cry *grace, grace unto it.* As stones, literally so called, are dug out of the earth, and are cut, and squared, and fitted for their proper places in the building, so sinners, who are *dead in trespasses and sins*, are, by the ministry of God's word, brought from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; and are, as living stones, added to the mystical temple of God. For this purpose, we who are devoted to the work of the ministry, are commissioned to tell mankind, that they are fallen creatures, to show them their guilt, and to warn them of their danger. We are commanded to publish to a lost world the glad tidings of salvation. We have authority to proclaim *the opening of the prison doors to them who are*

* Eph. ii. 20, &c.

bound, to inform the guilty, that if they feel their wretchedness, and sue for mercy, the Saviour will be gracious, and that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. We are instructed to say to every weeping penitent, *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.* And some of you can, from your own experience, testify, that our labour is not in vain: for you have been quickened, and as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

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HITHERTO, I have spoken of only the more immediate design of the christian ministry; a design, the fulfilment of which we have, in a good measure, seen with our eyes. But all this is intended in subserviency to a still nobler purpose. The full accomplishment of this lies beyond the reach of our senses: it can be viewed by us, only through the medium of faith. The work of the ministry will be continued, the saints shall improve in knowledge and in holiness, and one and ano-

* Acts xvi. 31.

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ther sinner shall be converted from the error of his ways, *till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*

THIS part of my text gives us an idea of good men, as pilgrims who are widely scattered abroad ; but who are all travelling to one appointed place of meeting. In the present world the church of God is in a state of imperfection. It is easy to perceive a great difference in the sentiments of even the most pious men. There are indeed some points of doctrine, without the belief of which, no man can be a true christian, and in which therefore all the followers of Christ are agreed. Such points are, the depravity of the human nature, and salvation through faith in the obedience and sufferings of Christ alone. But there are many things, the knowledge of which, though not absolutely essential to our salvation, yet is connected with our comfort and our steadfastness in the ways of God. Concerning these, such great differences

differences prevail, that perhaps the ideas of no two christians upon earth are exactly alike. This observation is verified, not in sentiment only, but in practice. A great difference is discernible in the modes of religious worship, to which different persons adhere. The very names of the numerous sects and parties, into which the christian church hath been split, would almost fill a volume. If we extend our notice further to the particular feelings and experience of good men, even there we shall find great variety, and great imperfection. There are some, whom the better we know, the more we admire, because of their conformity to the image of Christ: but this is far from being an universal case. One man perhaps, possesses an accurate knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, yet enjoys but a small portion of their reviving influence. Another, who barely understands the first principles of christianity, is influenced by an intemperate zeal, and hurried into perpetual mistakes. The ex-

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perience of some christians, like the coarse hollow murmurings of the wind in a desert place, throws a gloom on every thing around them. That of others consists in the alternate influence of extreme joy, and extreme sadness. This moment, they seem to be on the wing for heaven, the next, they are terrified as if falling headlong down the precipice of destruction.— But, to point out all the varieties and imperfections, which are observable in doctrine, in practice, and in experience, would be an endless task. Let it suffice to remark, that from all these different points, our ministry tends to lead on the servants of God to unity and to glory.

THE good, of every name and distinction, shall *all meet in the unity of the faith*. When we meet in heaven, and perhaps not till then, we shall possess an entire uniformity of ideas. Concerning the last and most glorious state of the church it is said, *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that maketh a *lie*. In heaven

* Rev. xxi. 27.

there will be no room for any kind of error. All the prejudices, by which we are now so frequently biassed, whether they have arisen from sinful habits, from education, or from the country or climate in which we were born, will be laid aside; and all our ideas will be regulated by the wise decisions of the Son of God. In this world, as the apostle saith, *we know in part only; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now, we see through a glass, darkly, as it were, in a riddle; but then, face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am *known.* O happy state! We shall then see no more ill-natured strife amongst the fellow citizens of Zion; but be wrapt up in the immediate vision of truth and of God.

THE unity of the church in heaven will also be conspicuous in their *knowledge of the Son of God.* The word which is here translated knowledge, does not relate simply to the ideas of the mind, but to the

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, &c.

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feelings of the heart. It includes acknowledgement and approbation. The unity of the faith implies the perfection of the understanding; and the knowledge of the Son of God means the confession of Christ, and our delight in him as the Son of the Most High. All sincere christians, even in this world, do, notwithstanding the opposition of the ungodly, confess Christ as their only Saviour. But we must all acknowledge, that self prevails too much in every part of our lives. There are seasons, in which we are too ready to ascribe to ourselves some part of that honour, which is due to Christ alone. But in heaven it will be otherwise. Our selfishness shall be done away; and we shall fully know, and unreservedly acknowledge, that Christ is all in all. Such a knowledge of Christ will be accompanied with the most inexpressible delight. We can, through mercy, sometimes, even now, say of Jesus Christ, that *he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely*, and can rejoice in him as our portion. But when
our

our knowledge of him shall be perfect, and we shall see him face to face, we shall all unite in more deeply admiring his glory as the Eternal Son of God, and shall feel a perpetual, sublime, and unutterable joy. Not a harp in the universal church shall be unstrung; not a string shall be out of tune. The palaces of heaven shall be filled with harmony, and praise to the Redeemer.

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AT that happy period, the church of God will have attained to the state of a *perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. This is a figurative expression. It is taken from the natural body of Christ, which had it's several stages of infancy, and childhood, and youth, and maturity: and it means, that when the ultimate design of the christian ministry shall be accomplished, the church will *be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*. The mystical body of Christ hath had it's infancy, and will most assuredly arrive at manhood.

SERMON.
XI.

It has been thought by some, and perhaps not entirely without reason, that this latter part of the text refers to the state of the bodies of good men in heaven. They have supposed, that the human body, like that of Christ at the time of his ascension, will then appear to be about that age, which we usually call the prime of life; and that none will be in a state of infancy, or of old age. Whether this particular idea be true or not, it is certain, that at the general resurrection, the Saviour will *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able, even to subdue all things unto *himself*. Whatever aspect our bodies may then wear, they will possess none of those infirmities, to which they are now exposed. They shall no more be liable to weakness or pain. They shall no more clog our desires, nor cool our devotions, nor in any manner be burdensome to the spirit. They shall possess

* Philip. iii. 21.

manly vigour, and be clothed with immortality. SERM.
XI.

BUT I think, that this passage refers principally to the soul. The whole church will hereafter, in a spiritual view, have attained it's full growth. Love, and humility, and gratitude, and every grace, will then have their full sway. Upon earth, the most eminent for piety have reason to complain of the imperfection of their knowledge and holiness. But in heaven, the weak believer shall *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; the timorous soul will have forgotten all his fears; the tempted christian will triumph over all his temptations; the poor tottering faith shall be exchanged for sight, and the hope of the feeble minded, for the full enjoyment of God. The flames of ardent love shall be kindled afresh in our bosoms, and shall give vigour to our zeal and diligence in the service of God.

THAT nothing may be wanting to complete the glory of the church, it shall be perfect in all it's parts. If a man possess
ever

SERM. ever so much health and vigour, yet if he
 XI. have lost an eye or a limb, he cannot be
 deemed a perfect man. Neither could the
 body of Christ be perfect, if any of it's
 members were wanting. The church
 which is now in heaven, is not absolutely
 perfect, nor will it be, till all true believ-
 ers shall be brought into the glorious pre-
 sence of God. But we are assured, that
 when Christ shall come to judge the world,
 he shall *send his angels with a great sound*
of a trumpet, and they shall gather together
his elect from the four winds, from one end
*of heaven to the *other.* The least and
 most insignificant member of Christ's mys-
 tical body shall not be missing in that day.
 Each one shall have his proportionate
 share of immortal felicity, and all shall sit
 down together at the marriage supper of
 the Lamb.

SUCH are the glorious ends, for which
 the christian ministry was established in
 the church. See then, my brethren, that
 this gift be not bestowed upon you in vain.

* Matt. xxiv. 31.

Learn to reverence the office, by which guilty men are snatched from impending ruin, and conducted to endless glory. We who sustain the sacred character of the ministers of Christ, do not ask any undue reverence to our persons; for in the course of our lives it is but too evident, that we are men of like passions with yourselves: but we beseech you, yea we exhort and charge you by the Lord Jesus, that you entertain a respectful veneration for the office, in which we are engaged. When we offer up public prayers in the church, we stand between you and the living God, when we explain to you the scriptures, we do not speak in our own name, we speak as the ambassadors of heaven: and our ministry is sanctioned by the authority of the Most High. If therefore you neglect or despise our ministrations, you discover, not only a total want of concern for your own happiness, but also a contempt of the Divine Majesty. You have heard, that God intends, by our services, to bring to eternal salvation, all who may be willing to enjoy it. Attend
then

SERM. then to our ministry, and to the design of
XI. God in it's establishment. Be serious and diligent in the service of Christ, and be concerned to feel it's proper influence on your hearts.

I AM about to descend from this pulpit, and to lead some of you to the table of the Lord. Attend, I pray you, to the design of this part of the gospel ministry. It was instituted, not to give your consciences a false peace : but to communicate to your souls that spiritual nourishment, by which you may grow up to maturity in the christian life. Do not think it sufficient to receive the bread and wine ; but be anxious to share in the benefits of the Saviour's cross and passion, to have your guilt pardoned, your sins subdued, and your souls made meet for heaven.

BUT let us rejoice, that ere long, the designs of God in appointing the christian ministry shall be gloriously accomplished. We now frequently complain of weakness and sin : but soon, we shall, if we be the servants of Christ, all unite in perfection,
 in

in harmony, in joy. Delightful meditation! We shall fly from distress, and enter into the presence of God. We shall dwell with angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect. We shall have no need of the sun or the moon, to give us light; for *the Lord will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory.*

S E R M.
XI.

S E R M O N X I I .

On the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY.

(Trinity Sunday.)

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 14.

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and
the love of God, and the communion of
the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*

S E R M .
XII.

EXPRESSIONS of good will often proceed from no other source, than what the world calls politeness. In many cases, they are no more than a hypocritical affectation of that sincere benevolence, which the christian beareth towards all. But the words which I have now read, contain a salutation, which flowed from the heart, a prayer, which, while it marks the character of its author, manifests itself

self to be worthy of universal regard. The apostle was desirous that the Corinthians; and all others to whom his epistle might come, should enjoy such blessings as are noble in themselves, and glorious in their origin. Let us enter immediately upon the discussion of this subject. Let us first contemplate the grand source of those blessings, of which my text speaks, and then consider their peculiar nature.

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ST. PAUL here directs our attention to the Lord Jesus Christ, to God, and to the Holy Ghost, as the prime source of all true felicity. These adorable names he mentions in a style, reverential, and yet so familiar, that it obliges us to conclude, that they were well known to the church at large. Indeed, it is a pity, that any man who is ignorant of them, should call himself a disciple of Christ: for he who is unacquainted with the great object of religious worship, must also be unacquainted with the nature of that worship, which it is his duty to pay.—But I must detain your attention for a moment, while I lay down

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down this as a preliminary observation, namely, that there is but one God. This truth is, in some measure, taught by the light of nature; and was not unknown to the heathen world. Though they had a multiplicity of what they called gods, yet they revered one being as the father of men and of the gods. And to this chief being they supposed that the other gods were subject. But for just and adequate ideas of the Deity, we must be indebted to divine revelation. In the scripture it is insisted on, as a fundamental principle, that there is one God, and no more than one. Lest the Jews should become guilty of idolatry, Moses said to them, *Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one* **Lord*. To this agrees the testimony of St. Paul. *We know, saith he, that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one*. And Jehovah himself challenges his creatures to produce evidence of the existence of any other God. *Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no*

* Deut. vi. 4.

† 1 Cor. viii. 4.

*God. I know not *any.* The divine essence cannot be divided. As this truth will not, I presume, be questioned, any additional argument or proof of the unity of the Godhead is altogether unnecessary.

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YET who can, without prejudice, read the words of my text, and not immediately conceive of three distinct persons? If the apostle had not meant, that we should form such a conception, he would, no doubt, have been more guarded in his expressions, or would have added some comment, in order to secure us from error and delusion. I will not however, rest upon this passage alone, for the proof of the distinct personality of the Father, and Son, and Spirit. It is a truth, which adorns many a page of the sacred writings. If we look into the narrative of the baptism of †Christ, we find that distinct personal actions are ascribed to each of them. The Son ascends from Jordan, the Spirit descends upon him in the likeness of a dove, and the Father speaks with an audi-

* Isaiah xliv. 8:

† Matt. iii. 16.

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ble voice from heaven. Let any man, who possesses plain good sense, and who is untutored in the sophistical arts of disputation, examine this narrative, and he will readily conclude that the evangelist speaks of them as being not one person, but three. God the Father, speaking from heaven, said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:* but this expression, unless the Son were a person really distinct from the Father, would have been unnatural. In such a case, he would rather have said, *This is I myself.* It is also unfair and unscriptural to suppose that the descent of the Spirit of God, and his lighting upon Jesus Christ, was only an emanation of the divine power or of some other attribute of Deity. The Holy Spirit descended in a visible form, and, by John the Baptist at least, was actually seen to light upon Christ like a dove. Whereas the scriptures never speak of the power, or of any other attribute of God, as being visible in itself, but only in it's effects.

To

To this may be added the testimony of SERM.
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 St. John. He saith, *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are * one.* I am aware that some enemies to the Trinity have pretended, that this passage of scripture is only an interpolation, and therefore not genuine. But men of good abilities and sound learning have proved, that in the most ancient and most respectable greek copies of the new testament it is retained, and consequently, that it is authentic. Indeed, if they had not proved this, the very connection in which it stands demonstrates it's authenticity. If we leave it out, we cannot make a complete sense of what the apostle says. He speaks of three witnesses to the messiahship of Jesus Christ, which are found in heaven, and of three, which are found on earth; and, in the ninth verse, referring to the whole of them, he calls the latter *the witnesses of men*, and the former *the witnesses of God*. Now if we were to omit the passage,

¹ John v. 7.

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which I have quoted, what the apostle means by, *the witness of God*, would be somewhat doubtful.—But, to pursue this argument any further would lead me from my present design. The expressions which St. John here uses cannot refer to three different qualities only, or properties of the divine nature, but to three different persons, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. The apostle further says, *these three are one*. They are not one in the same sense in which they are three; for that is an absolute impossibility: nor are they one merely in design; but in essence.

I MIGHT now refer you to the ordinance of christian baptism, which, by the command of Christ, is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and to a variety of passages in both the old and new testaments, some of which prove simply a plurality, and others of which precisely mark out a trinity of persons in the Deity. But this, instead of one, would require several discourses. I shall therefore proceed, just to mention a few scriptures, which fully assert
the

the supreme Godhead of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. SERM.
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WHEN Mary, the mother of our Lord, entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted her cousin Elizabeth, she said, *My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my *Saviour.* The Saviour in whom she rejoiced she very properly calls God: for God hath said, *Beside me there is no †Saviour.* But the angel which appeared to the shepherds applied this very character to Jesus Christ. He said, *Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the ‡Lord.* We ought therefore to believe that Jesus Christ is that God, in whom Mary rejoiced, and beside whom there is no Saviour.—The well known expression of Thomas, upon seeing Christ after his resurrection, is a further proof of our doctrine. He addressed him in this language: *My Lord, and My ||God.* If Christ were not God, he would no doubt have reproved Thomas for his mistake.

* Luke i. 46, 47. † Isaiah xliii. 11. ‡ Luke ii. 11. || John xx. 28.

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But as he did not reprove him, we must conclude that the apostle's application of such a character to Jesus Christ was perfectly right.—I will also just remind you of what St. Paul said to the elders of the church of Ephesus: *Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own *blood.* Now it is evident, that Jesus Christ was the person, who shed his blood for the salvation of the church. Consequently he is the person of whom St. Paul speaks, and whom he calls God, and who really is God.

I GRANT, that in many parts of the sacred writings Christ is spoken of, as being inferior to God the Father. But, if we apply such passages to the human nature of Christ, which certainly ought to be done, a child may explain them. He is man as well as God. In respect to his human nature, he was, no doubt, inferior to God; but in regard to his divine nature, he hath no superior at all.

* Acts xx. 28.

By a method similar to that which I SERM.
XII.
have now followed, may be proved the
Supreme Deity of the Holy Spirit.
When Ananias sold his land for the be-
nefit of the church, and brought to the
apostles only a part of the price, pretend-
ing at the same time that it was the whole,
Peter said to him, *Why hath Satan filled
thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to
keep back part of the price of the land?
While it remained, was it not thine own?
and after it was sold, was it not in thine
own power? Why hast thou conceived this
thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied
unto men, but unto *God. The Holy
Spirit dwelt in the apostles. This Spirit,
Ananias attempted to deceive by a lie:
and Peter told him, that he had lied unto
God. Therefore the Holy Spirit is truly
and properly a divine person.—Again, in
the first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul
saith, *Know ye not, that ye are the temple
of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth
in you?* And in another part of the same*

* Acts v. 3, 4.

† 1 Cor. iii. 16.

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epistle he saith, *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; which is in *you ?* The very same person, whom in one of these expressions he calls God, in the other he calls the Holy Ghost: which, unless he knew the Holy Ghost to be the true God, he certainly would not have done. A similar argument arises from two other passages of the new testament. In the second epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul saith, *All scripture is given by inspiration of †God.* But †St. Peter saith, *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy ‡Ghost.* Hence it is evident, that the apostles of Christ believed and taught, that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, that he is the Supreme God.

MANY other proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Deity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, might be brought from the word of God: but for the present, let what has been said suffice. I have said enough, to shew you, that the doctrine which I have already advanced, is not

* 1 Cor. vi. 19. † 2 Tim iii. 16. ‡ 2 Peter i. 21.

without foundation, enough, I hope, to SERM.
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excite you to a further and closer examination of it. But all enquiries of this kind should be pursued with humility. Difficulties there are, and indeed must be, in our way. We are finite beings: whereas God is infinite. No wonder therefore, that we should not be able fully to comprehend his nature. But we may, and ought to go as far as the scriptures will lead us. Where they lead, we may follow with safety. Let us *then beware, lest any man spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men.* Let us take the word of God as our rule. Then shall we heartily unite in saying, "There is one God, one Lord; not one person only, but three persons in one substance. For that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or **inequality.*"

I HAVE made the source of those blessings, which are mentioned in my text, a

* Communion Service.

leading

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leading article in this discourse ; partly, because our church, having commemorated the divine power and goodness of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, closes the season of her solemn festivals, by calling us to the contemplation of the ever blessed Trinity ; but more especially, because right ideas concerning God are necessary to our having a clear view of the glorious system of redemption. As the three divine persons, which subsist in the unity of the Godhead, are truly distinct from each other, so also are the parts which they take in the covenant of grace, and the peculiar benefits which they bestow. To the examination of these let us now proceed.

ST. PAUL mentions *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. By the term *grace* he means generally, unmerited favour, and more particularly, an interest in that eternal redemption, which Christ hath obtained for his people. He calls this the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*; because the gracious and compassionate heart of Christ is the grand fountain, whence it more immediately

mediately flows. *We all like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way.* We have presumptuously stretched out our hands in rebellion against that Being, whom it was both our interest and our duty to reverence and love. Hence it is, that we are perpetually surrounded by disease, and misery, and death, in all their horrid forms. Hence arise all the various disorders and conflicts of the soul, and the numerous pangs and throes of conscience. And hence too, our exposure to the flaming vengeance of God. So truly deplorable is our state as sinners, that all the flowing tears of repentance cannot, strictly speaking, wash away one stain from the heart; nor can all our apparently good deeds and good dispositions atone for even the smallest transgression. And so far are we from deserving any assistance from Christ, that naturally every action of our lives, and every thought of our hearts, has a tendency only to rouse his indignation. But Jesus Christ could not behold us sinking down into the gulf of ruin, with.

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without feeling the utmost concern. He set his heart upon our deliverance. As nothing short of perfect righteousness could give us any claim to the glories of the heavenly state, he became incarnate, became our surety, and wrought out that righteousness in his own person: and as nothing but his blood could quench the burning wrath of God, he scrupled not to shed his blood for that purpose. He fell a victim, that death might be destroyed. He rose from the grave, and triumphed over it, that life and immortality might be brought to light. In virtue of his merits and sufferings he obtained *gifts for men, even for the rebellious*. And he now sits upon his glorious throne, distributing his favours amongst men with a liberal hand. To those who languish under a conviction of guilt, he administers a free pardon. The wretch who groans under the galling yoke of sin, he sets at liberty. The christian who is beset by violent temptations, he aids and defends. The poor backslider, who, because of repeated iniquities, fears

to lift up his watery eyes towards heaven, he restores to peace. Upon penitent and believing sinners he bestows a free justification from every charge, which may be brought against them, By him they are adopted into the family of God, and invested with all the rights and privileges of children. He gives them a peculiar interest in his providence, and in his promises and declarations of mercy. He hath prepared for them, and in due time will give them the absolute possession of supreme felicity and glory in heaven. Do you ask a proof that Christ actually bestows such blessings upon his fallen creatures? Read the scriptures attentively; and you will find the proofs of my doctrine in almost every page. But the best kind of evidence is that, which arises from experience. O then, make trial of the Redeemer's grace. Sinner, *believe in the Lord Jesus, and verily thou shalt be saved.* Such indeed is his grace, that even the faith which is necessary to our participation of his benefits, is his own free gift.

Hence

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Hence it is said, *By grace are ye saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of * God. Ask then, and receive, that your joy may be full.*

TOGETHER with the grace of Christ, the apostle joins the *love of God*; that is, of God the Father. By this he intends not only the principle itself; but likewise all its happy effects and consequences. The love which God hath for his people, is manifest in the part which he takes in their redemption. If we draw aside the curtain of time, and look back into eternity, we find, that even then, this love was active in their behalf. Long before we, or the world, had any existence, God, foreseeing that man would fall into sin and misery, entertained thoughts and purposes of mercy. He not only consented to, but, together with the Son and the Spirit, actually formed a covenant of grace. In the framing of this covenant, he appointed his own beloved Son the Redeemer of a fallen world. He knew that our redemption

* Eph. ii. 8.

could

could not be effected, but at the expence of the tears, and groans, and blood of Christ. But to him this was no obstacle. The salvation of sinners lay near his heart; and he determined that it should be accomplished. The apostle John saith, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our * sins*. Now, as the substitution of Christ in our place must of necessity be voluntary, and not constrained, and as he was to take upon him our nature, and in that nature to act as our surety, it was absolutely requisite, that he should be at his own disposal. And such was the love of the Father to his creatures, that he gave to the Son of man full authority to lay down his life as a sacrifice for them, and, when justice should be satisfied, to reclaim and recover it again. Hence Christ, in a conversation which he held with the Jews, said, *I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my † Father*. For the

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* 1 John iv. 10. † John x. 18.

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for the sake of Christ, the Father accepts all true believers, adopts them into his family, and holds communion with them as children in whom he delights. He hath constituted Christ, as Mediator, Lord of the creation. *He gave him to be the head over all things to the *church:* so that he might quicken whomsoever he would, and bestow upon them all the blessings of grace and glory. And that nothing in the universal system of providence might hinder, but that every thing might be subservient to the great work of redemption, he hath subjected angels, men, and devils, to Christ as their supreme Lord and Judge. He rejoices in all the measures, which Christ hath taken, for securing the everlasting happiness of his people; and will account the redemption of sinners his principal delight and glory, to all eternity:

THE apostle mentions next, *the communion of the Holy Ghost*. By this he means the communication of those gifts and graces, which it is the peculiar province

* Eph. i. 22.

of the Holy Spirit to impart. The primitive christians were endued with extraordinary and miraculous powers, which have long since ceased. But the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, as they are still necessary, are still bestowed. Christian ministers have need of his assistance, that their natural and acquired abilities may be strengthened and improved; so that they themselves may be *workmen who need not be ashamed*. Fathers and heads of families have need of his influence, that they may be able to instruct their families properly in things which pertain to life and godliness. Individuals have need of his teaching, that they may obtain a clear insight into the truths of God. But something more than all this is necessary to constitute us real christians. Therefore the Holy Spirit communicates those graces to the heart, which taking root there, spring up, and bring forth fruit unto life eternal. He it is, who humbles the spirit of the sinner, and fills him with that brokenness and contrition of the heart, on account of sin, which it is said in the

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scripture, that *God will not despise.*⁶ He it is, who reveals to the poor penitent the suitableness and excellency of Christ as a Saviour. *He shall glorify me, saith Christ, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it* x *unto *you.* It is the office of the Holy Ghost to excite within us a spirit of prayer. *He helpeth our infirmities; and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* It is he who enables us to believe the promises of God, and to live upon them. Hence he is called the Comforter. He weans us from sin, and enables us to grow up in holy conformity to the image of Christ. Whatever good we enjoy, we receive through his ministry: and whatever good we do, we do it by his gracious assistance. *He worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good †pleasure.* Thus he gradually prepares the servants of Christ for that state of consummate purity and happiness, which is reserved for them in heaven.

* John xvi. 14.

† Romans vi. i. 26.

‡ Philip. ii. 13.

On the Doctrine of the Trinity.

UPON the whole, it is easy to perceive, SERM.
XII that a proper knowledge of the Trinity is of very great importance. It is indeed of such importance as fully to justify those damnatory clauses, which the creed, that we have this day repeated, contains. Whoever errs in this point, cannot be a worshipper of that God, by whose inspiration the scriptures were given. O my brethren! be not like those careless persons, to whom it is perfectly indifferent what sentiments they imbibe. There are such things as *damnable *heresies*. Beware of sucking in the poison, lest it destroy you. How can we expect, that God will regard our religious services and our seemingly good conduct, while we take no pains to be acquainted with him? If we know him not, how can we love him? And if we love him not, how can we render him any reasonable service?—But there are those, who would fain persuade us, that the doctrine of the Trinity is beyond the reach of common capacities, and fit for only philosophi-

* 2 Peter ii. 1.


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cal heads. If they mean, that we are not able fully to comprehend the divine existence, it is granted. In such an attempt philosophy itself must perish. But surely, what is revealed concerning it, it is every one's business to know and believe. It is evident, that in my text, the apostle speaks of it in such a familiar style as necessarily leads us to conclude, that the knowledge and worship of the Trinity was common to all, who, in his time, made any profession of christianity. And why it should not in our days, no sound reason can be given. They who would persuade you to indifference are the enemies of your salvation. If they prevail on you to be indifferent about the truth, their next attempt will be, to prevail on you to deny it. Be not deceived. Do not content yourselves with a superficial knowledge of the God whom you profess to serve. Seek to know more of him day by day. Search the scriptures: and implore the assistance of that gracious Spirit, who alone can regulate our ideas, and rectify our hearts and lives. *Buy the truth;*

truth; and sell it not. Its value and importance are too great to admit of trifling. Sacrifice every thing which would prevent you from obtaining it. And having obtained it, keep it as a precious treasure, to the purchase of which the world is not equal. S E R M.
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BEFORE I conclude, I cannot help taking notice of that truly benevolent spirit, which my text breathes. The apostle wished the Corinthians, and all, to whom his epistle might come, to be partakers of the blessings which he mentioned. Casting his eye forward through successive ages of the church, I imagine I hear him say, May these blessings be with you all! Rich and poor, learned and illiterate, young and old, male and female, bond and free, christians of different denominations, men of distant countries and different complexions, may you all possess and enjoy them! O let us enter into the spirit of St. Paul. Let us beseech the Father of mercies to bestow upon us these exalted favours. Let us seek them for each other. Let us pray that they may be diffused throughout

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throughout the world: As members of the church of Christ, we ought to possess a public spirit, and to use all proper means of strengthening it's interest, and promoting it's welfare. Every christian ought, in his conversation and deportment, to aim at communicating real piety and happiness to all around him. We are taught and encouraged to expect a time, when truth shall banish error from every corner of the earth, when grace shall universally triumph, and when the love of God shall dwell in every heart. We should rejoice in the prospect; and by our prayers and assistance, strengthen the hands, which are employed in disseminating the knowledge of God. Let us in the whole course of life make it appear, that we wish nothing more ardently, than that the blessings which we have now contemplated, may be the portion of all. And with gratitude and pleasure let us continually look forward to that blessed state, in which, if we be real christians, we shall enjoy them in their fullest latitude, and in their brightest glory.

PERMIT me now in imitation of the ^{SERM.} apostle, to close this discourse, by ut- ^{XII.}  tering the wish, which lies nearest my heart. May the knowledge of the adorable Trinity; and may *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all! Amen.*

THE END.

